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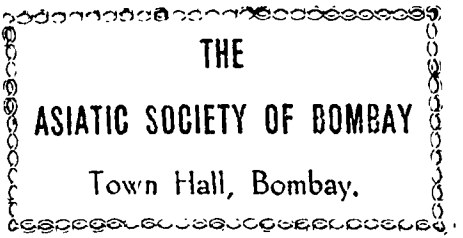

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SERMONS,

&c. &c.

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VOL. II.

SERMONS

ON

DIFFERENT SUBJECTS.

7.215

IN TWO VOLUMES.

68001

BY

WILLIAM HAWTAYNE,

RECTOR OF ELSTREE, HERTS;

Formerly of Oriel College, Oxford, and for some Years Chaplain in his Majesty's Navy.

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Page 24, line 9, that unity—*read*, that a unity.

220, bottom, *for* πονειας—*read* πονηριας.

227, line 16, *for* doctrines—*read* doctrine.

332, last line, It is Christ died—*read*, It is Christ that died.

336, line 11, *for* ife—*read* life.

350, line 9, *for* This Malachi—*read* Thus Malachi.

357, *for* προσαγματα—*read* προσαγματα.

SERMONS,

&c. &c.

SERMON I.

ON BROTHERLY LOVE AND UNITY.

PSALM 133, 1.

" *Behold, how good and how pleasant a*
" *thing it is, for brethren to dwell*
" *together in unity.*"

EVERY reflection upon the state of man, shows him to be a creature formed for society. All his wants—all his natural affections—all his natural endowments

—point him out as a being by no means intended for solitude. And hence every notion of his happiness or satisfaction must be drawn from the connection he has with his fellow creatures. In proportion as he advances in civilization or in knowledge of any kind; this will more strongly appear to be the case. The pleasures of an enlightened mind depend on participation. Even knowledge itself, would be equally useless to the possessor, as well as with respect to others; were it not communicated. Sentiments of love, friendship, and esteem, which belong to mankind in an eminent degree, are the properties of a sociable being. And to go no farther, the powers of conversation are alone sufficient indications that we were made for mutual intercourse—for the good and delight of each other. By the powers

of conversation, I do not mean the simple power of speech; but rather, certain operations of the mind, which have their foundation in nature, and which direct the use of language, and make us capable of giving proper expression to the various thoughts and perceptions of the understanding. It may therefore be said, that the mind is naturally stored with social operations, as well as with social affections.

As our intercourse with the world is enlarged by the necessary business of life, or by the attractions of family attachments, the bonds of society become increased and strengthened.

Religion manifests itself to be a main pillar of union, teaching that we are all

children of the same Almighty Parent; to whom his protection and blessings are impartially extended, apparently so at least, and to whom eternal glory is equally promised.

Considering us thus literally in the light of brethren, the far greater part of the duties imposed on us by religion, are social duties. The commands of God are particularly calculated to make us valuable and happy members of society. They show us, that the happiness of the next world is not to be attained so certainly by any means, as by the discharge of those duties which render us amiable and respectable in the sight of each other. Nor can any person quit this life with equal satisfaction, or hope, to that of him, who has contributed to the designs of Provi-

dence, by having acted justly, according to the various relations he has borne to his fellow creatures.

Designed thus, and framed by our maker, for the help and comfort of each other, and which is so manifestly the case as to put aside every distinction of person and character, it surely will be acknowledged, to be not only desirable, but the most interested duty of every one, to answer this great end of his creation. Since we not only must, but ought to live together. Since be our station what it may, we must in a great degree, be dependent on one another; we shall give a proof of our wisdom and prudence, by endeavouring to dwell together in unity.

One would imagine that a conviction so generally acknowledged—that a wish so generally expressed, as this is, would every where produce the desired effects. Who is there that would not willingly prefer unity to discord? Who is there that would not rather live in peace and quietness, in love and friendship, than amidst the heartfelt torment of suspicion, of dissention, and disputes?

Persons of every description, of every age, and rank, can without any great discernment, easily give an answer to this question. How happens it then, that the dictates of nature should not be as eagerly followed in this instance, as in most others? How is it that motives of interest should in this respect fail in their usual influence? Strange it is that we should

ever be disappointed in our expectation, of what is so obviously and unequivocally the foundation of happiness; and of what is so professedly coveted by all mankind.

One would think that to live in unity were the easiest thing in nature. Alas! I fear it is the most difficult. And to prove it so, it might be sufficient to say that it depends upon the dispositions of men. Upon their dispositions, which are almost as variable as their features. Before any number of persons, be it great or small, be it within the narrow bounds of a private family, or the more extensive circle of a town, a neighbourhood, or a whole nation; before any of these can dwell together in unity, a thorough confidence, respect, and esteem, must be

reciprocally established. The foundation of this is integrity, and ingenuousness, besides the softer virtues of humility, kindness, and a sympathetic feeling for the mental and bodily sufferings and infirmities of each other. Where these qualities are not to be found, a show of unity, barely sufficient for the purposes of life, corrupt and vitiated as we see it, may be kept up; but there can be no sincere bond of union of that nature, to which the Psalmist alludes in my text. To effectuate this, mankind must be of the same mind, and must have but one principle; which is that of doing right upon all occasions, as far as the powers of human nature will enable them. I say the *powers* of human nature and not the *weakness*; because I believe the capability of doing right is granted us in a much greater pro-

portion than we are willing to admit. And though it may be difficult, yet it cannot be thought impossible, to reach that state of happiness, which must be produced by living in a state of unity. Would we but endeavour to carry into practice, what we are so well acquainted with in theory; would we follow that universally admired precept of christianity, of doing to others what we would wish them to do to us, and become examples of those virtues, which are justly the objects of our veneration, the enjoyment of this world would far exceed all that the warmest imagination can form of it. And the wonder is, that a truth *so* generally acknowledged, should be unproductive of consequences so desirable.

The living in unity, seems in one sense

to resemble those judicial burdens, which our Lord accuses the Scribes and Pharisees of laying on mens shoulders; though themselves would not move them with one of their fingers. (Matt. xxiii. 4.) All men wish it, if we are to believe what they say—all own the beauty of it, all are sensible of the satisfaction arising from it; yet few take any pains to produce it: and are only eager to require from others that acquiescence, in which they find it so difficult to join.

Thus the proud man tells you he is willing to live in unity. But to do it, he will not bate a jot of his own fancied importance, nor of that servile respect which he vainly thinks it is the duty of his fellow-creatures to pay him. The rich man says, he is extremely desirous of preser-

ving unity; but all his encroachments must be endured, all his humours and whims must be submitted to, at the expense of the benefit and comfort of all around him. Equity must be suppressed, if it cross his views; and merit must often crouch to upstart ignorance and to lawless assumption. The man of business is a great admirer of unity. But all his peculations must be overlooked; all his fraudulent tricks and advantages must remain unnoticed.

Nay, the passionate man is a lover of unity. But his abuse, and his oaths, must be borne; and must be attributed to an unaccountable no-meaning wayward custom.

Thus could it be shown by a variety of

instances, both in public and private life, that whilst every one professes a wish to live in unity, it is only upon the score of an unlimited submission in other people. All indeed wish it, but all must have their peculiar desires gratified. Oppose them with whatever sense of justice, and *you* are perversely accused of being an enemy to peace and good fellowship.

Resist the haughty insolence of the proud—assert your rights against the man overgrown in wealth—detect the deceptions of commerce—expose the schemes of the malevolent,—and of the disingenuous—correct the errors and vices of the thoughtless and dissolute—nay, offer them advice, with never so much friendship and caution, and *you* are immediately taxed with the infringement of unity. All

these good people would wish to live peaceably. And all they require is, that all the world beside should submit to their impositions, their rudenesses, and their injuries. This is one instance perhaps when we can all see the mote in our brother's eye, but perceive not the beam in our own. (Matt. vii. 3.)

Would to God it were far otherwise. But if what has been stated be at all the case, the difficulty of dwelling together in unity will be evident. For it will be seen to depend upon private, personal, and individual virtue and morality. And to exist in proportion as these are conspicuous. Hence did I say, that it depended on the dispositions of mankind. With minds well disposed, and well regulated, the preservation of unity is not so diffi-

cult. They will neither on the one hand, be apt to offend, nor be captious on the other. The open and ingenuous, the honest and liberal, the humble and contented, may enjoy and may diffuse the blessings of friendship. Persons who are rewarded with the fruits of industry, and who keep clear of the base arts of deception; those who are by any means blessed with affluence, and are above taking any unfair advantage, which the precariousness of fortune may give them; those of affable obliging tempers and of chaste inoffensive manners; with such it is not only possible, but easy to live in unity. But any over-bearing pride and insolence, any mean designing artifices, any direct fraud or deceit, any base spirit of revenge, any degrading profligate vice — these are crimes that are the most effectual bars to

unity. Nor are those who detect an, oppose them, to be deemed litigious o. quarrelsome.

Because it is not possible, that they whose natures are happily free from such blemishes, and who cannot but abhor them; should maintain any pleasurable intercourse with those who live in the practice of them. Virtue that is aided by reflection, cannot suffer itself to be the dupe of vice. It must indignantly repel it. It is unnatural to associate with those, of whom you cannot have a good opinion. For, as St. Paul says, "What fellowship "hath righteousness with unrighteous-"ness."? (2 Cor. vi. 14.)

By considering in this manner, the obstacles which prevent us from living like

brethren; from enjoying what we must all so ardently desire, and what it is so much the will of God, and so much the intent of religion to promote; we may learn by what means it may most undoubtedly and most effectually be produced.

As far as our commerce with the world in general is concerned, honesty, fair dealing, and a decency of behaviour, seem to be the principal requisites. When the duties of individuals are considered, and as connections become more intimate, several others qualities will appear necessary; some of them so minute perhaps, as to escape discussion; but nevertheless important. Honesty for instance, though a most exalted, may yet be called a stern virtue; and may in its

abstracted sense be practised by those, who take no pains to ingratiate themselves with mankind. But to preserve the unity of brethren, the unity that is the indispensable cement of smaller circles; milder affections must be engaged. Compassion for human failing, complacency, and a mutual wish of accommodating, and pleasing.

"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her "Sister, and Lazarus! (John, xi. 5.)

We cannot read this mark of approbation in the Son of God, without imagining that these happy objects of his esteem, were a family living in love and unity; and by this means making themselves beloved and respected by their friends and acquaintance.

A mere adherence to the rules of strict justice, as that word is generally used; will not effect this. The manner of doing justice must also be attended to. Not only a desire to please, but a willingness to be pleased, must be indulged. A carefulness not to offend, and a backwardness in being offended. The wisdom that is from above must be sought. That wisdom, "which "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, "and easy to be entreated; full of mercy "and good fruits; without partiality, and "without hypocrisy." (James iii. 17.) Here, the obliging husband, and the tender wife; the kind parent, and the affectionate child; the compassionate master, and the grateful obedient servant; must severally exert themselves, to fulfil the duties of their stations. Duties, not only pointed out to them by nature, but

imposed on them by the God and Father of them all, as the sure criterions by which He will decide their eternal fate. This, and this only, is the way to produce, and to maintain a unity, springing forth as the natural fruit of love and respect.

How clearly would such conduct show itself to be founded in wisdom, How readily would it be acknowledged to be good and pleasant; or good and joyful. When ambition and avarice should no longer lead men to be envious and treacherous one towards another. And nations should no more be wasted by wars and tumults. When secrecy and suspicion should be banished, by the establishment of truth and fair dealing. When a love of God,

and of piety, and the prospect of eternal happiness, would teach men to despise the groveling arts of fraud and malice. And when a strict attention to morality, would introduce universal confidence. This is the unity extolled by the Psalmist. And, for its soft, healing, attractive, adhesive qualities, aptly said by him to resemble ointment, or oil, and dew. For as ointment mollifies and cools the inflammatory heat of a wound, so unity represses and assuages the turbulence of passion. And as dew refreshes and invigorates the drooping plants of the earth, and increases its fertility; so unity dispels the weight of affliction, and helps to raise the sinking spirit of man: gladdens his heart, and makes him productive of good works. Nothing is so destructive of all good,

as disagreement and discord. Nothing is so great an incitement to all that is good and praiseworthy, as brotherly affection and unity. For a man to feel himself among his fellow creatures in the world in general, more especially among those of his own neighbourhood, as in a circle of his brethren; safe from all dread of deception, or injury, and secure of the good will, friendship, and assistance, of all around him — To find his house undisturbed by peevish discontent, by jealousy, pride, or ill-temper; and cheared by that peace, and affection, which nature has established as his due — If anything can promise him happiness, if any thing can give him a contented mind, fill him with gratitude to his Creator, and provoke Him to acts of philanthropy and benefi-

cence; it must be such a condition as this. A condition, so much resembling that future state of happiness which God has promised to those who love Him, as to add to its other excellencies, the certain expectation of that eternal blessing.

"Behold how good and joyful a "thing it is, brethren, to dwell together "in unity."

"It is like the precious ointment "upon the head, which ran down unto "the beard, even unto Aaron's beard; and "went down to the skirt of his cloathing.

"Like as the dew of Hermon, which "fell upon the hill of Sion. For there

" the Lord promised his blessing, and " life for evermore."

As the oil used in consecration was peculiarly pleasant on account of its fragrance, as well as of its being emblematical of the benefits which were expected to flow from the wisdom and virtues of those who were sanctified, and devoted to God, by the ceremony of its effusion; and as on the mountains round Jerusalem, particularly on those of Hermon, or Sion, blessings were showered in an especial manner; showing it to be a land high in the favour of God—enlivened by his spirit, and rendered instrumental in procuring innumerable blessings to mankind—So, says holy David, must the unity, that is produced by a pious and moral life,

be the most certain means of producing happiness, doth in this world and in the next.

To what has been said, many inducements might be added, to persevere in a conduct so surrounded with benefit and comfort. But one perhaps above all the rest, is, the foundation it lays to hope, and to believe indeed, that unity at present so grateful to our Almighty Father, will this life ended, be renewed in His Kingdom. And that those who have dwelt in love here, will continue to do so for ever!

May it be our endeavour then, to live like brethren in unity. Which, though it may be difficult, is not unattainable. We are not tacitly to ex-

pect it from the efforts of others; but are to consider ourselves severally as the instruments that are to produce it. Let each person be circumspect as to his own conduct. Let him correct his own vices, and foibles, and evil dispositions; and the universal wish would be obtained.

The assembling in the church, and seriously and punctually attending to its ceremonies and service; would doubtless soon be acknowledged great aids: as of themselves having a tendency to draw our minds towards the same object—and to unite us in the same sentiments, the same belief, and the same hopes.

Nor can any one of our religious ceremonies, nor any part of our service,

be thought more efficient, than that in which you are now called upon to participate. The principal intent of which is, to invite us to the recollection, and to the imitation of that love, which Christ the divine institutor, manifested for the whole world. And having thus proved ourselves his servants and followers on earth, we may humbly hope that He will acknowledge us for such before his Father who is in heaven—"And to Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us"—To Him with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be glory in the church now and for ever.

SERMON II.

THE DANGER OF FOLLOWING GENERAL CUSTOM.

EXODUS, xxiii. v. 2.

"*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to*
"*do evil.*"

THIS is one among those excellent laws which Moses gave the antient Hebrews. And it is particularly adapted to meet the weakness, and to correct the errors of mankind in general. Nay, we might ra-

ther say, that it is particularly suited to the condition of human nature.

The force of example is perhaps greater than it is in general thought to be. And not only greater, but more universal. By the word example, I mean to include custom, habit, or fashion. And we see, in the great world, how quickly and how easily we become reconciled to any custom or fashion that prevails; and that we adopt it, without at all consulting about the propriety or impropriety — without suffering our own opinion or judgment to interfere — in short, without any consideration whatever.

It is too often thought, that in matters which do not immediately seem to be connected with religion, every pursuit of this

nature may be indulged innocently. That, the colour or shape of a garment; that the modes of dress, or choice of amusement, can have nothing to do with the religious, or even with the moral character of a man —though I do not like the distinction— and that in these, and other like cases, general custom may be followed without any possible harm attending it.

But this is very far from being the case. Every day will convince us, that even trifling fashions lead numbers out of their natural course of life—lead them into habits for which they were neither designed nor fitted, and into expenses which they cannot bear: and thus plunge them, often unexpectedly, into infamy, disgrace, and ruin.

Neither precept nor experience however has any weight—on they go—blinding themselves with such arguments, as, that they *must* do as others do, and that what every body does, or what most people do, cannot be wrong.

But would it not be well, if a rational creature did nothing without consideration? Let us remember, that man alone, of all the creation, by his reason, his understanding, his power of thought and reflection, is made capable of knowing God, and of worshipping, serving, and obeying Him. And that therefore he may depend upon it, there is nothing that he can either do or say, that is not closely connected with the service of God—with that obedience which we all owe Him—with that

solemn account which we must all give him!

Would it not be wise therefore, to make use of the sense which God has given us, and to guide ourselves by *his* law, rather than by the opinion or example of frail creatures like ourselves? "Thou shalt "not follow a multitude to do evil."

In a variety of ways it might be shown, how dangerous it is to follow fashions and customs, even, as I have said, in matters that are called trivial, and that are not thought, though erroneously so, to have any thing to do with religion. Such, for instance, as dress, and the manner of living, the expenditure of the house, or the management of an income. In these things it were easy to show the danger and mis-

chief of following general custom, and that numbers will not insure safety.

If in these circumstances you were to look at the consequences that usually follow, you would be of the same opinion. For to speak of dress—and as shortly as possible—you may have observed, no doubt, numbers in the middling class of life—the happiest if they could but think so—and numbers even in almost the lowest, ruined; strange as it must seem, by extravagance in this way. By aping those above them, whose fortunes allow a certain expense, and whose rank and situation entitle them to it. Though not to extravagance—for no one has a right to indulge that. You may have seen numbers, I say, thus squandering sums of money, that would have made a happy provision

for themselves, and perhaps for their families, in times of necessity, or of old age.

But this is not all the evil. For to the *expensiveness* of dress, let me add a few considerations upon the *manner*. And let me ask, if you have not seen many a young person, and particularly many a young woman, who, by the studied wantonness and indecency of her dress, has pushed herself into notice, when otherwise she might have remained unnoticed—that is, excepting the common regard of her equals. Who has thus put herself into the way of temptations which she would otherwise have avoided—till at length—she has fallen a prey to that delusion she has courted, and has been driven into the extreme of disgrace, of want, and wretchedness! The body—which the

Apostle calls "The temple of the Holy "Ghost"—it is a serious thought,—made the idol of lust—the soul lost—and the heart perhaps of the pitiable misguided parent, broke!

By what means has this happened? By what I am now talking about—by an extravagance, and a most shameful indelicacy of dress, to which the circumstances of the persons so offending—that is, their fortunes, and their rank in life, I must insist upon it, ought to have been a sufficient bar, if they had no other considerations.

With regard to the other point in question, that of the manner of living; much observation is not necessary. Here too it is much too frequent, that numbers are

ruined, and reduced to a state of indigence, and even of beggary, from no other motive than that of conforming to general custom; and a desire, a *harmless* desire, as it is sometimes called, of keeping themselves upon an equality with their neighbours. Without considering how far they are enabled to do so, and without any attention to the rules of propriety and honesty.

Now will you tell me that religion has nothing to do with these things? Will you say there is no sin in them? Are not the laws of God manifestly broken? It is true, many arguments are brought forward in support of such conduct: but they must be weak and inadmissible; because all the arguments in the world can never persuade me to think that conduct right, by

which there is a possibility of producing the mischief I have described, to ourselves or to others.

The holy Apostles did not think these particulars unconnected with religion, or beneath their notice. In the first epistle of St. Paul to Timothy we read, "I will "therefore, that men pray every where, "lifting up holy hands, without wrath "and doubting. In like manner also that "women adorn themselves in modest ap"parel, with shamefacedness and so"briety; not with broidered hair, or gold, "or pearls, or costly array: but—which "becometh women professing godliness "—with good works." In the third chapter of St. Peter's first general epistle, you will find much the same admonition.

St. Paul again, in his observations to Timothy, upon the qualifications of Bishops and Deacons, says of the former, that he should be one "that ruleth well his own "house, having his children in subjection "with all gravity—for if a man know not "how to rule his own house, how shall he "take care of the Church of God? And "let the deacons," says he, "be the hus-"band of one wife: ruling their children, "and their own houses well?" Again, as St. Paul writes to the Romans, "Provide "things honest in the sight of all men." (ch. xii. 17.) Again, "But if any provide "not for his own, and specially for those "of his own house, he hath denied the "faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v. 8, 14.) "Honour the Lord," says Solomon, "with thy substance." (Prov. iii. 9.) Which can only be done

by using it properly, with judgment, and discretion, and so as not to give offence to any one. In all these things, what the sacred writers chiefly aim at, was the recommendation of decency, prudence, integrity, and good example.

And having thus spoken shortly of the danger too often attached to general custom, I pass on to consider more minutely that force of example which prevails in particular societies; and which almost imperceptibly expands and nourishes vice, to the certain destruction of the soul.

We are easily led, I have observed, to follow the customs of the world in general; with which, as individuals, we have often little to do, and from which a small degree of resolution might preserve us. But we

are much more easily betrayed into those habits which are daily and hourly before our eyes, and to which our situation unavoidably familiarises us. Indeed it becomes almost natural, to do as we see our friends and companions continually doing. It is difficult, not to live as they live; and it requires an extraordinary share of firmness, not to imitate them in every particular. It is here that the force of example is particularly strong, and here its effects are more directly visible; and if the example be bad, more pernicious, than in the world at large. Here it often happens, that by the evil disposition of a few, vicious practices are introduced and upheld, to the utter destruction of numbers. Here, from small beginnings, sin is often seen to triumph over religion and morality, and by swift advances, to crush all pro-

priety and decency. By example and by imitation this ascendency is confirmed. And whether it be lying, or blasphemy, or obscene talking, or whatever be the crime that is once suffered to prevail, one sinner upholds another, till the very nature and consequences of sin are forgotten, and each thinks he is perfectly safe, as long as he sees numbers as bad as himself.

It is against this kind of example, the example of your own immediate companions; and of those with whom you are unavoidably connected, that I would seriously warn you. And to use the words of the great Apostle St. Paul "Let no man deceive you with vain "words: for because of these things "cometh the wrath of God upon the "children of disobedience." (Eph. v 6.)

We cannot always choose our companions—nor will our engagements with the world enable us to avoid bad example altogether. For if, as the same inspired monitor observes, we would entirely keep out of the way of evil doers, "we must "needs then go out of the world." (1 Cor. v. 10.) But we must endeavour to do it as much as possible. Since our own eternal fate depends on it in so great a degree.

Every person should recollect that his actions and his conversation depend upon his own will. He should recollect that he will have to account for both to his Almighty Creator. That he has a soul at stake — and a state of eternal existence to undergo, which will be either happy or

miserable, according as he conducts himself in this state of trial.

These are things, you will say, often repeated. But whoever considered them as truth — whoever thought of them even as probabilities, and reflected upon the vast importance attached to them — if he had common sense, he would judge for himself — he would form an opinion of his own — and endeavour to live according to that. He would not suffer himself to be led into the danger of eternal condemnation, by following the example of any thoughtless profane being, or beings, whom chance might throw in his way. He would also lay aside the rank and character of such persons; and learn to detest and avoid the example of the man-

Such would be the conduct of every sensible person, or of every one who could be persuaded to think at all seriously of God, and of his own soul!

And let me observe, that what is commonly called sense, is not confined to any rank or description of men. Some, by a variety of circumstances, improve it more than others — but all men have sense enough to know right from wrong. We must all be equally conscious that we have within ourselves the power of choosing or of doing either. And we must therefore be as sure that we shall be made answerable for our choice by that Almighty and All-ruling power, "whose eyes," it is said, "are in every place, beholding "the evil and the good." (Prov. xv. 3.) We cannot therefore want much persuasion to

be convinced, that it neither is, nor can be, an excuse for any kind of wickedness, or for any gross impropriety, that numbers practise it: let their situation in life, or their acquired abilities, be what they may. "Thou shalt not follow a multi-"tude to do evil."

The subject thus considered, leaves us to place every man's conduct in two points of view. First, with regard to himself, and secondly, as it respects others.

First, with regard to ourselves, I know not what argument can have more weight than that declaration in the Gospel, that God is no respecter of persons — that he will judge all mankind with an equal balance, and reward every one according to his works. "The soul," says the prophet

Ezekiel, "The soul that sinneth, it shall "die" — that is, it shall be lost! and could we, each of us, singly, be convinced of this solemn reasonable expectation; what, we should ask, have we to do with the conduct of other people? What have we to do but to look seriously to our own, and endeavour to secure our own salvation, though we may be so unfortunate as to see thousands around us risking theirs?

Whether, let me ask, will it most avail us, at the hour of death, to feel that we have wantonly or thoughtlessly preferred the having been the dupes of sin and folly — or having been imitators of that possible and perfect pattern, left us by Christ Jesus, whom God sent into the world on purpose to show us the way to

eternal glory? What comfort, think you, shall we be able to derive, at our last hour, from the consideration, that those friends and companions of ours, by whose example and countenance we have often been induced to mock at sin, to ridicule religion, and to blaspheme the holy name of God and of Christ — what comfort, I say, will it be to us, when we are at the eve of quitting this world, and on the point of being cloathed with immortality, to know that such our companions are in the same awful predicament as ourselves? In the same wretched alarming state of fear, or of doubt, to say the least of it? What argument will this be in our favour? Or how will it lessen our guilt? — How *then*, shall we wish that we had had "no fel- "lowship with the unfruitful works of "darkness?" (Eph. v. 11.) — That we

had not suffered our judgment to be warped, and our minds and morals to be tainted by them? And how dreadfully applicable to us will be those words of St. Paul — "What fruit had ye then in "those things whereof ye are now "ashamed? For the end of those things "is death!" (Rom. vi. 21.) We shall then forget the conduct of others — our thoughts will be engrossed with our own miserable state — and we shall wish that instead of having been tempted to reject Christ, we had believed in Him; and instead of having ridiculed his name and his word, that we had reverenced one, and obeyed the other. Remember, that "the righteous hath hope in his death," — but that the scoffer and the obstinately wicked can have none!

To avoid these certain consequences of infidelity and profligacy, and even of thoughtlessness, which are confirmed to us by the experience of every age, since the Gospel of Christ has been preached; let each one, now, I exhort you, judge for himself. Let him think seriously of his own soul — assuring himself, that the example neither of the highest, nor of those who may appear to be the best informed, will justify unbelief, and impiety, and immorality, in the sight of God.

In the second place, we are to consider the conduct of every man with respect to others. And on this point all I have to offer is, that since on one hand the power of example is certainly great, and on the other, men are so naturally prone to imi-

tate — let each one duly consider, with how much reason he will have to answer, not only for his own sins and follies; but for those of others who may have been perverted and ruined by his means. If, as St. James says, the converting a soul shall cover a multitude of sins, it may as readily be concluded that to assist in the loss of one, will greatly increase the guilt of such offenders. We may most reasonably be assured, that it will greatly add to the measure of our own iniquities, if by any means we become the cause of sin in others. What father would willingly lead his own child to perdition? And how equally thoughtless and abominable is it, by our actions, or by our conversation, to mislead the young, the unwary, or the ignorant.

In this respect it is, that the weight of example much depends upon the rank, or the supposed abilities, of those that set it. All men look up to those above them for example; supposing, naturally enough, that superior station is accompanied with superior understanding. Give this observation then the weight it may deserve — and let it act as a caution to all men, who must be convinced, that it is vain to expect good children, good servants, or good subjects, if parents, and masters, and governors, or rulers of any description, by their own example set forth the cause of vice and immorality. As fruitless is it to look for comfort or friendship amongst equals, where religion, morality, and decency, are not respected.

It would be very happy, though it is a

happiness I fear rather to be wished than expected, if considerations of this nature found their way into the minds of persons of rank and fortune. And since they cannot but be aware of the force of example, that they would, in some points, give way to the weakness of those whom they know likely to become the dupes of *their* indiscretion and folly; and be careful even of the fashions they introduce, the customs and habits they countenance, and, in few words the example they set in every respect. All they have to urge in defence of their not doing so, is, that others are under no obligation of imitating them. But this is a poor excuse — none indeed for *them*, nor for those who generally become the greatest sufferers — who are not *obliged* to follow bad example, but on the contrary are obliged by every tie,

divine and moral, to consult their own happiness, present and future; whatever be the rank or qualities of such as are too frequently seen to be careless and indifferent in this respect.

There remains, I repeat, no excuse, in any rank of life, for profusion, extravagance, or for indecorum. From which it is impossible to separate the mischief it may do, and does, we will say, undesignedly.

On all these accounts, for the sake of others, as well as of ourselves, God Almighty grant, that we may be prevailed on to discountenance what we know to be wrong, and to encourage the practice of piety, and virtue, and decency; which we must equally know is our indispensa-

ble duty, as rational creatures, and as Christians. By so doing, and by this only, we may look forward to prosperity in our undertakings and employments, to the present and eternal blessing of God, through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ.

To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour, praise, and dominion, for ever and ever.

SERMON III.

THE HAPPY EFFECTS OF CONFESSION AND FAITH.

LUKE, vii. 50.

"*And He said to the woman, thy "faith hath saved thee; go in "peace.*"

I HAVE lately spoken to you upon the subject of confession—and endeavoured to lay it before you, as a duty of great necessity and importance — deriving that

necessity and importance, in great measure, from the qualities that may naturally be supposed to accompany it. And they are, faith, contrition, and repentance.

Faith in the mercy of God through Christ to forgive sins—a hearty sorrow for having offended God by committing sin,—and a sincere wish and determination to offend Him no more. — I observed, that persons who have not a sufficient sense of sin to perceive the danger of it, and to be alarmed for the state of their souls — who have no remorse for having acted in opposition to an indulgent God and merciful Saviour—such persons can never be aware of the necessity and importance of confession — which is, of itself, when properly exercised, the truest sign of a penitent

heart; and therefore the sure road to forgiveness and peace.—

You will readily imagine, that a confession which is continually and periodically made, by rote as it were, without any sense of guilt—and which is continually followed by the daily repetition of corrupt and sinful practices—you will readily imagine, I say, that this is not the confession to which God has absolutely promised unbounded forgiveness.—

But it is to a heart sinking under the weight of its own sinfulness—a heart looking with horror upon its own depravity and want of gratitude—a heart sensible of the abuse that has been made of the superior endowments granted to man—a heart awakened to a just dread of divine ven-

geance—as knowing that to be its only deserts — but yet, not altogether without a wish and a willingness to implore the mercy of God, as far as it dare. — It is to the humble confession of such a heart, or mind as this, that God has promised, that He will cleanse it from all unrighteousness.—It is to persons of such a contrite, humble, altered disposition as this, that Christ makes the inviting call of "Come "unto me, all ye that labour, and are "heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Mat. xi. 28.)

The history belonging to the text sets this doctrine in a striking light. It relates, that as Christ sat at meat in the house of a Pharisee who had invited Him, a woman of the city who had been a great and notorious sinner, knowing that Jesus was

there, came to the Pharisee's house, "with an alabaster-box of ointment, and "stood at his feet behind Him, weeping; "and began to wash his feet with tears, "and did wipe them with the hairs of her "head; and kissed his feet, and anointed "them with the ointment." — What an interesting, amiable, and undeniable picture is this of a true penitent! —

Who that imagines he sees this woman, but can easily read every thing that passes in her heart. — Every action is expressive of the truest humility — the most heart-felt consciousness of guilt and unworthiness — the most undissembled abhorrence of her past life — and the most ardent desire to supplicate the mercy of Heaven. The whole of her behaviour denotes her sincerity, which, it may be observed, is rendered the more unequivocal by its being

so publicly displayed. She had no false shame of disclosing the anguish of her mind before strangers, or to those who it should seem were acquainted with her former life—her only wish was to make all the atonement for her sins that was in her power, and to seek reconcilement with God, through Christ Jesus, in whom she confided as the Mediator and Saviour of mankind. It was indifferent therefore to her, who saw her — or whether she was seen or not—she shut out the world, and placed herself in the presence of God only. Here was confession, though not a word were used — her heart was too full for utterance — she knew that Jesus was thoroughly acquainted with all the emotions of her soul—and though she does not speak, every action equals, if not exceeds, the most refined eloquence — It

may be called a picture of dumb oratory—and for this confession and faith, Christ puts her heart at rest, by the assurance of forgiveness—adding, as he very frequently did in like cases, his testimony to the excellency of faith — " Thy faith hath sa- " ved thee; go in peace."—

Besides the happy consequences which are here seen to arise from sincere repentance and faith, two occurrences offer to substantiate the truth of Christ's divine character. One is, the proof He gives of knowing the thoughts of his host, as well as of what passed in the heart of the afflicted penitent — the other, the power he assumes of forgiving sins. — The Pharisee who had invited our Saviour, appears to have done so, more out of curiosity than respect—or although he might intend to be

civil, it was not without a determination to keep a strict watch upon his guest, in hopes of finding something either in his behaviour or conversation that might lessen the weight of his character. When he therefore saw that Jesus was disposed to admit the silent acknowledgment, it may be called, the adoration, of the woman alluded to, he would feign have attributed our Lord's kindness, to his ignorance of the character of the person before him — and hence he thought a sufficient doubt was to be maintained of Christ's divine power — "This man," said he to himself, "if he were a Prophet, "would have known who and what man- "ner of woman this is, that touched him, "for she is a sinner." — How mistaken, and uncharitable a suggestion was this in every respect. With regard to the woman,

how uncharitable—who, whatever she might have been, was now an altered person — though she had been a heinous sinner, she was so no longer—she was now thoroughly ashamed of her past conduct, and sincerely sorry for it — and was therefore entitled to the kindness and compassion of every good person. But the Pharisee was not singular in his harsh judgment — for it is a way of thinking and of acting too common even among Christians — who perhaps follow the example of Him whose exalted name they bear, in nothing less, than in over-looking the errors, and accepting the concessions of one another — by which means, I fear, it often happens, that repentance and amendment are checked, for want of that encouragement, which a recollection of our own sins and weakness, and need of forgiveness, should make us

ever ready to extend to others.—Seldom do we bear in mind, that grateful admonition of the great Apostle—"Brethren, says "he," "If a man be overtaken in a fault, "ye that are spiritual, restore such a one "in the spirit of meekness, considering "thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear "ye one another's burdens, and so ful- "fil the law of Christ." (Gal. vi. 1, &c.)

The Pharisee was a prejudiced enemy, though perhaps not a stranger to the doctrines of Christ; which upon every occasion inculcate these benevolent principles; and therefore he rigidly judged, that the repentance of the woman deserved no credit—and because she had for a time been a sinner, she was always to be treated as one. This is an uncharitable way of thinking, I say, never to be found in gene-

rous humble minds. For they who most feel the weight of their own sins, and the want of God's forgiveness, will always be most ready to forgive the faults of others.

The strength of the Pharisee's remark was however aimed at our Saviour, rather than at the woman, and was more intended to depreciate his character than hers. "This man, if he were a prophet, would "have known who and what manner of "woman this is that touched him." And a very weak and absurd remark it is, with respect to Christ; for it was neither necessary nor was it ever supposed that a prophet should know the hearts of all men. But the Pharisee was willing by any means to support the notion that Christ was not what he professed himself—that

is, that He was not the Messiah. To prove this, clashed with his wishes—and though he had put on the show of civility by asking Christ to his house, he would nevertheless have been glad to have held him up as an impostor, and as an impugner of the law of Moses. In short, we may learn from this man's character and behaviour, how easily prejudices are formed, and how easily cavils are made; and what attention those ill-designed cavils and objections deserve, which are raised against religion, by the lukewarm, and by those who are only half-disposed to receive it, and to comply with its dictates; who though they make a hypocritical profession of religion, are more ready to follow the bent of their own inclinations, than to submit to the doctrines of the gospel. We may learn also chearfully to take upon us

the yoke of Christ, and to confide in his promises, from many similar instances to those that are here given of his manifesting his divine power, by discovering his perfect knowledge of the heart and thoughts; and by the undeniable testimony He gave of his authority and power to forgive sins. With what benignity does he let his incredulous host see that He well knew what was passing within him, and what unwarrantable suspicions he entertained. And how strongly at the same time does He justify his kindness towards the repentant sinner. "And Jesus answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee; and he saith unto him, master, say on—There was a certain creditor," said our Lord, "who had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they

" had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave
" them both. Tell me therefore, which of
" them will love him most? Simon an-
" swered and said, I suppose that he to
" whom he forgave most. And He said
" unto him, thou hast rightly judged.
" And He turned unto the woman, and
" said unto Simon, seest thou this woman?
" I entered into thine house, *thou* gavest
" me no water for my feet; but *she* hath
" washed my feet with tears, and wiped
" them with the hairs of her head. *Thou*
" gavest me no kiss; but *this woman*, since
" the time I came in, hath not ceased to
" kiss my feet. Mine head with oil *thou*
" didst not anoint; but *this woman* hath
" anointed my feet with ointment. Where-
" fore I say unto thee, her sins, which are
" many, are forgiven; for she loved much:
" but to whom little is forgiven, the same

" loveth little. And He said unto her, thy " sins are forgiven."

Censure must be dumb—and suspicion must be lulled, upon such an explanation as this. The sincerity of the woman's repentance, and her humble confession, are not to be doubted. And the goodness and mercy of God through Christ to sinners so repenting and confessing are equally worthy of acknowledgment. Let us hope that they may be equally consolatory to us, and conducive of the same humility and love towards God.

It is a common saying, perhaps not unknown to you, that the greatest sinners become the greatest saints. And though it is often used in a taunting unjustifiable manner—yet it is a most reasonable and

justifiable expectation. For it is very natural that they who have been delivered from the greatest afflictions, should bear a proportionable degree of gratitude towards their deliverer. There is no affliction greater than sin—no burden heavier to be borne, than that which opens the prospect of eternal misery—no distress more poignant than that of a wounded spirit—and therefore is it very natural that the most grievous sinners who are come to a sense of their guilt and of their danger, and who by the mercy of God can also feel the hope or the assurance of pardon, should ever after be the most forward to praise God for his goodness, and to declare the wonders that He doeth to the children of men. Such was the case with this woman—she was sinking under the weight of her unworthiness—but she felt that God was

gracious—and she loved Him for those attributes of tenderness and mercy which already began to influence her mind. And therefore the burden of her iniquity was removed, and though her sins had been as scarlet, they were become white as snow. (Isaiah, i. 18.)

But was it the condescension of our Lord in suffering this enviable, though afflicted woman, to approach Him, that this hard-hearted, hypocritical Pharisee would have reprehended? Alas! he did not consider, or he was not willing to admit, that the purport of Christ's coming was to save sinners, and that only, or chiefly. He would not allow that Christ came, as He himself declares, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Matt. xv. 24.) that He came not to call the righteous, but

sinners to repentance; that He came, not with the gorgeous apparel and retinue of an earthly prince, to flatter the pride and ostentation of the rich and haughty—but on the contrary, as the humble, though wonderful messenger of God, richly endowed with power from on high, to comfort the afflicted wheresoever they were to be found—to beat down the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile—to unite all men in a bond of brotherly love,—to pay in his own body the forfeiture of sin—and to reconcile fallen man with his offended Maker. Such was the exalted, and at the same time humble, that is, kind, meek, merciful, character in which Christ appeared. And which character He sustained, like a skilful physician, by visiting the sick, not the whole; and by suffering and inviting those who stood most in need

of his assistance, to lay their sorrows open before him. It was not a matter of reprehension that He joined such societies—with them He mixt, not to partake of their vices, but to bind up their wounds, "to "show compassion to the ignorant, and "to them that are out of the way." (Heb. v. 2.) It was his employment, as the great Isaiah foretold of him, "to preach the "Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-"hearted, to preach deliverance to the "captives, and recovering of sight to the "blind, to set at liberty them that are "bruised." (Luke, iv. 18.) Nor does He ever appear more resplendent in majesty and glory, than when we hear Him saying to the sinner, as on the present occasion—"Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." I cannot omit an observation upon the testimony to Christ's character, arising from

the very objection made by those in the Pharisee's house to his forgiving the sins of his contrite supplicant. "Who is this," say they, "that forgiveth sins also?" Who indeed!—"Who," as the Scribes inwardly murmured upon another occasion, "can "forgive sins but God only?" (Mark, ii. 7.) When Christ, to show his equality with God in this respect, worked a miracle. It is from such testimony abundantly afforded us by the Holy Scriptures, that we are to contemplate the character of the adorable Jesus. Let us hence learn, to search into our own hearts, and by meditation and reflection endeavour to gain a consciousness of our own dangerous sinful state. Let us consider in how many instances we have been guilty of a neglect and contempt of God's goodness—and in how many we have abused our superior

talents. And hence let us learn the necessity of repentance, of confessing our sins, and of conducting ourselves for the future, submissively and humbly before God. The value and importance of so doing has been fully depicted in the history of the text. And let us not be deterred from following so animating an example, by the dread of being accounted fanatical and superstitious—or by supposing that the warmth of devotion is incompatible with the business or with the enjoyments of life. Whatever false notions we may indulge of this kind, the time will arrive, I must for ever remind you, that no thought or wish will possess our minds, if we are capable of thinking, but the wish of being admitted to God's mercy through Christ. The present moment is the time to seek it, if we would secure it. We must repent, while we

have the power to amend, if we would reap the never-failing advantages of repentance; for repentance is amendment, and not sorrow merely. And may we by the mercy of God, "grow in grace, and in "the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour "Jesus Christ." (2 Peter, iii. 18.) Learning daily not to trust to our own imperfect righteousness, but to his merits who alone can save us. That we may feel the promised comfort of his peace in this life, and be partakers with Him of eternal glory in the world to come.

SERMON IV.

THE DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE NOT ALWAYS TO BE TAKEN LITERALLY

LUKE, xiv. 26.

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

NEXT to a conviction of sin, of contrition, and repentance, which have been the subjects of my late discourses, may

be expected an inclination or a desire to come to Christ. For till the mind is so prepared, such a holy and happy determination can scarcely be looked for. Indeed the thing is almost impossible. But if the coming to Christ, and deserving the name of his disciple, were attended with such insuperable obstacles as the text lays before us, according to the direct and literal acceptation of the words; to come to Christ would be as impossible. Since it is impossible to imagine that any man can hate his father and mother, his nearest and dearest relatives, and his own life —Or that he should be required to do so, by the most unexampled pattern of love, and of all excellence.

This text therefore is one of those

sentences of scripture which call for particular explanation. And it is for that reason that I chose it. It will be best explained by combining other texts of scripture with it—either of a similar, or of an opposite nature. The former will corroborate the sense I mean to give it. The latter will show you that the proposition itself as it stands, cannot be complied with; without violating the main principles of revealed religion altogether. And God grant that my endeavours to explain it may redound to his honour and glory, and end in your satisfaction and instruction. Now the sense in which I conceive the words of the Text is to be taken—and the only sense in which they can be taken, consistently with innumerable other parts of scripture; implies no more

than a preference, a competition or comparision.

The words in which St. Matthew has related an admonition of the very same nature, if not upon the same occasion, agree at once with what I have now advanced. In the 10th chap. of St. Matthew Christ says, "He that loveth father "or mother *more* than Me, is not worthy "of Me: and he that loveth son or "daughter *more* than Me, is not worthy "of Me"—Here is a comparison. The word hate itself will admit of various interpretations and modifications. In its most direct and immediate sense, it implies animosity, rancour, violent passion and anger, the utmost disgust and contempt—exciting to malice and revenge. Than which nothing can be more offen-

sive to God, nor more opposite to every principle of revealed religion. Thus in the dispute between Esau and Jacob, in the 27th chap. of Genesis, we read "And "Esau *hated* Jacob because of the bless- "ing wherewith his father blessed him: "and Esau said in his heart, the days of "mourning for my Father are at hand; "then will I slay my brother Jacob." (*v.* 41.) This is the true character of hate or hatred. But that it is often to be considered with a less acrimonious meaning will appear from the following passages. In the 29th chapter of Genesis it is said "And when the Lord saw that Leah was "*hated*, he opened her womb; but Rachel "was barren." Where we need not infer, that Jacob *detested* Leah, or bore any malice towards her, but that he did not love her with that ardency of affection which he had for

Rachel. And indeed this is fully expressed in the verse immediately preceding—where we read, " And he loved Rachel *more* than Leah." (v. 30, 31.) Again, when Christ observes, in the 6th chap. of St. Matthew's Gospel, that " No man can " serve two masters: for either he will " hate the one, and love the other, or else " he will hold to the one, and despise the " other"—(v. 24.)—The chief of what is meant seems to be, that no man can or will serve two masters of an opposite character with an equal degree of zeal and affection. No man who considers the benefit of his own soul, can serve God and the world with the same warmth of attachment. But there is nothing in the world (sin excepted) that is to be despised or contemned, unless the love of God be brought into competition with it.

Again, it is said in the 14th chapter of the book of Proverbs, "The poor is *ha-*
"*ted* even of his own neighbour: but the
"rich hath many friends." (v. 20.) This is a lamentable truth. And it too often happens that the poor are slighted, and contemned, and disregarded, and held in little or no estimation, even by their own equals. But it is not to be presumed that they are made the objects of malignity and detestation by any. God forbid that this should ever be the case!

Again, in the 13th chapter of Proverbs it is said, "He that spareth his rod *hateth*
"his son." (v. 24.) Whereas it is too often a blind, mistaken, foolish *love* that tempts a man to with-hold correction. But a love almost always so pernicious in its consequences, and so often ending in

the destruction of the child, that a man may be said to *hate* his son, if he suffer him to grow up in vicious and sinful habits, for the want of a judicious and timely correction. *He* wisely and truly loves his son, who chasteneth him betimes.

These are a few of the passages of a similar nature with the expression in the text, in which the word *hate* calls for a qualified interpretation.

I will now mention a few passages of Scripture of an opposite nature to the expression of the text, and which will convince you that it was not designed to be taken literally. To begin with the law of God, as delivered to Moses,—we are all sufficiently acquainted with the fifth commandment. "Honour thy father and

" thy mother, that thy days may be long " in the land which the Lord thy God " giveth thee." Which, as St. Paul observes to the Ephesians, by way of enhancing the value of it, " is the first " commandment with promise." (ch. vi. 2.) And it will be readily acknowledged, that no man can honour his father and his mother, and hate them at the same time. But further to show in how great estimation this duty of love and reverence to parents was held before God—in the 27th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy we read, " Cursed be he that *setteth light* " by his father or his mother." (v. 16.)—

Again, in the 21st chapter of the same book of Deuteronomy, we find that a stubborn and rebellious son, who would not listen to the voice of his father or his

mother, was ordered to be stoned to death. (v. 18, &c.)

Again, in the 19th chapter of Leviticus we read, "Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father." (v. 3) Where fear is put for respect and reverence and obedience—the very reverse of hatred in any way.

Again, in the 21st chapter of Exodus, "And he that *smiteth* his father or his "mother shall surely be put to death. "And he that *curseth* his father or his "mother, shall surely be put to death" (v. 15, 17.)—So much for that love and respect and attention which the law of God requires to parents.

Now with regard to that affection and

attachment which God also expects should subsist between a man and his wife, we cannot be forgetful of the remark which Adam made, when Eve, as the history says, was brought unto him. And no doubt it was the suggestion of their joint Creator. "And Adam said, This is now "bone of my bone, and flesh of my "flesh. She shall be called woman be- "cause she was taken out of man. "Therefore shall a man leave his father "and his mother, and shall cleave unto "his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Gen. ii. 23, 24.) Which is a command or an ordinance that we shall find ratified by Christ himself in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark. (Matt. xix. 4. Mark, x. 6.) Hence St. Paul writes to the Ephesians with this injunction. "So "ought men to love their wives as their

" own bodies. He that loveth his wife,
" loveth himself. For no man ever yet
" *hated* his own flesh; but nourisheth and
" cherisheth it, even as the Lord the
" Church." (chap. v. 28, &c.)

In the last place, respecting the love which ought to be cherished among those of the same family, St. Peter calls upon all men to " be of one mind, to be pitiful, " courteous, and compassionate, and " to love as brethren." (1 Peter, iii. 8.) Imagining that the love which ought, I repeat, to be maintained between brothers and sisters, must be of the most affectionate, tender, and disinterested nature. If we should take the term brethren in the extensive light very frequently to be observed in Scripture, as comprehending all mankind in one bond of affinity—Let

us attend to what St. John says in his first general epistle, "He that saith he is "in the light"—that is he that professes christianity, "and *hateth* his brother, is "in darkness even unto till now." He knows nothing of the Gospel. "He that "loveth his brother, abideth in the light, "and there is none occasion of stumbling "in him. But he that *hateth* his brother, "is in darkness, and walketh in dark-"ness, and knoweth not whither he "goeth, because that darkness hath "blinded his eyes." (ii. 9, &c.) Again, "Whosoever *hateth* his brother is a mur-"derer: and ye know that no murderer "hath eternal life abiding in him." (iii. 15.) Again, "If a man say, I love God, and "*hateth* his brother, he is a liar; for he "that loveth not his brother whom he "hath seen, how shall he love God whom

" he hath not seen? And this command-
" ment have we from Him, that he who
" loveth God, love his brother also"
(ch. iv. 20, 21.)

I shall now close these quotations, which I trust have not appeared superfluous, with the words of our blessed and Holy Redeemer; and which of themselves may be thought sufficient to substantiate what has been advanced, "Ye
" have heard that it was said by them of old
" time, Thou shalt not kill: and whoso-
" ever shall kill, shall be in danger of the
" judgment. But I say unto you, that
" whosoever is angry with his brother,
" without a cause, shall be in danger of
" the judgment: and whosoever shall say
" to his brother, raca"—which is a term of contempt and hatred,—" shall be in dan-

" ger of the council: but whosoever shall " say, thou fool, shall be in danger of " hell-fire! Therefore if thou bring thy " gift to the altar, and there rememberest " that thy brother hath ought against thee," —that is, there rememberest that there is any animosity or malice between you,— " Leave there thy gift before the altar, " and go thy way: first be reconciled to " thy brother, and then come, and offer " thy gift." (Matt. v. 21, &c.) All of which goes to teach us, that no act of devotion will be accepted, if it comes from a heart capable of hatred and malice. Again, in the same chapter of St. Matthew, " Ye have heard that it hath been " said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, " and hate thine enemy; but I say unto " you, love your enemies. (v. 43, 44.)

How then shall we be able to reconcile the assertion of Christ in the text, that no man can be his Disciple, unless he hate those whom he is so repeatedly and so earnestly commanded to love, and whom the first instinctive principles of his nature teach him to love—but by believing it necessary to qualify the expression; and that it was used under a notion of referring to some kind of preference or comparison. And in this way it may be made congenial to the whole doctrine of the Scriptures, as well as to the spirit of sound reason.

Christ has here taught us, that He must have the whole heart, pure and undivided. He has not offered us a religion unconditionally. The nature of things will scarcely allow of such a possibility.

Almost every thing belonging to man, or that comes within the reach of his judgment or opinion, is to be judged of conditionally and by comparison. He that will preserve his health, as far as himself is concerned, must be temperate—He that will preserve his character, must "abstain from all appearance of evil"—He that will be honest and comfortable, must be industrious. And in proportion as these rules are observed, the desire will be obtained. Thus, considering the unmeasurable blessings of salvation, and the greatness of that love which God has shewn to mankind through Jesus Christ; he that comes to Christ, and will be his Disciple, must prefer Him to all things. Nothing in this world—no one gratification, or passion, or affection of the mind must be put in competition with Him.

It is not saying, nor could it ever be meant, that the love of Christ, and the most natural and laudable attachments and propensities of the human mind, were necessarily to be disunited—because the contrary might be proved, by a thousand arguments and illustrations. But if they were to be compared, and if one were necessarily to be abandoned—there is no question but that the love and duty we owe to Christ ought to have the advantage. Because nothing can equal that love which He, speaking of Him in the plenitude of his character, has manifested to us.

Who would not give up father, and mother, and wife, and brethren—or even the life which he now holds, rather than forego the blessings of salvation? This

is the point of view in which we are to place the words of the text. If we cannot bear the loss of these present enjoyments with a holy submission, with Christian faith and patience, we show that we love them more than we love Him—and in that case, we cannot be his Disciples. If we cannot so far obey the will and commandments of Christ—and determine to follow his example, as to subdue our passions, and renounce the advantages, and the allurements of the present world, rather than run the risk of being renounced by Him —we shall show that this world has the ascendancy over our hearts. And in that case, we cannot be his Disciples.

Christ himself has shown us, in the temptation which He endured for our sakes, and for our example, in what way

the allurements and attachments of the world are to be treated, let them come in never so promising a shape. "Get "thee hence, Satan," said He, when the Devil "showed Him all the kingdoms of "the world, and the glory of them," offering to put them all in his possession if he would fall down and worship Him. "Get thee hence Satan; for it is written "thou shalt worship the Lord thy God "and Him only shalt thou serve." The happy consequence was, that the Devil left Him, "And Angels came and minis- "tered unto Him."

So must it be with us. He that comes to Christ, or he who fancies or imagines that he has come to Him, must prove himself by this criterion—He must consider in his own mind, the trials, and tempta-

tions, and difficulties he *must* meet with, and prepare himself for the reception of them; as the man who intends to build a tower, "sitteth down first, and counteth "the cost, whether he shall have suffi- "cient to finish it." And if he find that he has faith and resolution to go through, the angels, or the all-powerful inexplicable spirit of God will assist his strenuous though imperfect endeavours, and lead him to a place of everlasting rest and happiness.

Thus I trust I have, in some measure, removed the difficulties of the text, and have shown you how it may be applied to our unspeakable advantage. To this end may God continue to us his blessings, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer and Saviour.

SERMON V.

ON SELF-DECEPTION.

1 Cor. x. 12.

"*Wherefore, let him that thinketh he*
"*standeth, take heed lest he fall.*"

Amongst the great variety of character that is to be met with in mankind, there must be a variety of opinions upon all subjects. Many men, many minds, is a well known proverbial saying. And this depends upon the different degrees of un-

derstanding that men possess—upon the different education they receive—and upon the different company or society into which they fall.

Some are able to support their opinions by a show of reason—by proof—and by substantial evidence. Others are bold enough to maintain theirs, without any of these. Some are unavoidably ignorant of general subjects, for want of opportunity of acquiring knowledge. Others have every advantage of this kind. And many are ignorant from indolence, and obstinacy, and from having a depraved mind, averse to all improvement, and to all good. So that he who should attempt to persuade all men to think alike, would undertake a most difficult task; and one that is perhaps altogether impossible.

As this, I believe, will be allowed to be the case in general, it is not extraordinary that it should be so with regard to religion. And even with the Christian religion.

Now religion is a concern altogether of a spiritual nature. Upon it depends, in a most essential manner, the eternal salvation, or the eternal loss and misery of the soul. Religion is surely therefore a most important concern. A concern, in which it might be imagined that every man, who was capable of thinking, would wish not to be deceived.

Religion is indeed a concern which puts the words of the text in a most momentous point of view, and makes them worthy of our utmost consideration. "Let him

" that thinketh he standeth, take heed " lest he fall."

It appears then from these words, that as in all other things, so in religion, the truth is to be sought. That there is a possibility of a man's deceiving himself—of thinking he is right, when he is wrong. And that by thus deceiving himself, he may run the fatal risk of losing his soul. " That there is a way," as Solomon says, " which seemeth right unto a man, but " the end thereof are the ways of death." (Prov. xiv. 12.)

This will be allowed to be extremely probable, even upon the strength of human reasoning. Because, however various the opinions of men may be, I fancy it must be granted, that there can be only

one way of being right. All the rest, however specious it may appear, is only *seeming* to be so.

And religion will be found to have one advantage over every other notion or proposition; which is this: that the more it is known and understood, the clearer the truth of it will appear, and be established. It is upon this principle, that I proceed to speak to you of some errors daily to be met with among the professors of Christianity, or among those who have been baptized into the name of Christ. For it is of that religion only that I mean to speak.

And I do not agree with those who think it wrong that the mass of people should know that the truth of the religion

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which is preached to them was ever doubted. Because it never was the intention of any preacher of the Gospel, at least not of the reformed Church, that any part of their audience, that any description of men, should remain ignorant, in any one particular, of the doctrines that are laid before them.

On the contrary, we would wish, that if it were possible, all the doubts that have ever been started against our holy religion, could be fully laid before the whole world. Assured, upon the strongest possible proof, that the Gospel of Christ will continue, as it has hitherto done, to maintain itself against them all. And that this success will be amongst the strongest proofs of its authenticity.

Besides, the holy Evangelists and the Apostles themselves, according to their usual undeniable truth and candour, have told us that the character of Jesus Christ was doubted, even by those people who lived with him, and who heard and saw what he said and did. In the 7th chapter of St. John's Gospel we read, that, speaking of our blessed Redeemer—"There "was much murmuring among the peo- "ple concerning Him; for some said, He "is a good man: others said, nay; but "He deceiveth the people." (v. 12.) And in the 28th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke relates, that when St. Paul was at Rome, "and expounded and "testified the kingdom of God," to as many as came to him, "persuading them "concerning Jesus, both out of the law of "Moses, and out of the prophets, from

" morning till evening; some believed the " things which were spoken, and some " believed not." (v. 23, 24.)

That this therefore should be the case at present, ought not to stagger the faith of any person. But, on the contrary, it should act as a spur and an inducement to every one, not to take any thing upon trust—but rather to make every possible enquiry, every diligent search, according to his ability, into the truth of a doctrine upon which the state of his immortal soul is said to depend. It was for this wise and reasonable conduct that we find the Jews of Berea particularly commended in the Acts of the Apostles. " These," says the historian, " were more noble than " those of Thessalonica, in that they re- " ceived the word with all readiness of

" mind, and searched the Scriptures daily " whether those things were so." And the consequence was, as I am persuaded it ever will be, that " therefore many of " them believed." (ch. xvii. 11, 12.)

But is this the case with the skeptics, the doubters, the unbelievers, and the luke-warm Christians of the present day? Have *they* any plausible reason to give for the sarcastic remarks, the idle open scoffs, the determined assertions, which they utter against the holy Scriptures? Have *they* ever read a prophecy, and consulted the fulfilment of it? Have *they* ever met with a type, a prefiguration of Christ, and remarked how far He answered the description? Have *they* ever carefully looked into profane history, and seen how intimately connected it is with the history of the

Bible? No, my friends, you will rather find, that generally, very generally speaking, those persons whom you happen to hear speak slightingly of religion, or of the Scriptures—and who presume to cast any joke or ridicule upon any of the sacred characters or relations that are there mentioned; and who plainly show by their lives, their words, and their actions, that they do not believe; that is, that they have no religious faith, except it be some phantasy of their own—you will find, I say, in general, that these are persons who have never taken the smallest pains to make themselves acquainted with the subject, and who never thought seriously about it.

To hear such persons say they do not believe—or that they have no faith—is not at all extraordinary.

But it is very extraordinary that they should be allowed more credit, or indeed that they should be allowed any credit—that they should be supposed to know more, or to know any thing, when compared with such a "cloud of witnesses," such an innumerable multitude of persons in all ages, who, with the first capacity for learning, with the greatest opportunities of obtaining knowledge, and with the most attentive application and study, have employed their whole lives upon the enquiry; and have embraced and defended the doctrine of Christ from the most perfect conviction. That all these should be deceived, and that they should all join and follow one another as it were, in attempts to deceive the world—and that others, I repeat, of a different description in every particular, and who are almost or altoge-

ther ignorant of the subject, should venture to propagate their opinions, or that they should be thought right—This is very extraordinary indeed!

And yet this is what you meet with every day. And it is an error, concerning which it behoves the ministers of God's word, in an especial manner, to follow the prophet Isaiah's injunction, when he says, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift "up thy voice like a trumpet, and show "my people their transgression, and the "house of Jacob their sins." (ch. lviii. 1.) Here the words of the text are exceedingly applicable. "Let him that thinketh he "standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Another error, which very naturally, and almost unavoidably follows that which

has been mentioned, is, that persons who reject the light of the Holy Scriptures, and who are unacquainted with them; are very apt to form a religion of their own: and one that is altogether destructive of God's majesty, and disgraceful to that understanding which he has given to man.

They lay aside every notion of God's constant and universal presence. They deny his close connection with mankind by the means of his Holy Spirit—they shut out every expectation of a future judgment—and can talk with ease of dying—either looking forward to annihilation, or imagining themselves secure of an entrance into heaven, whilst they are leading a life, opposite in every respect to every rational notion that can be formed of the

unbounded knowledge, power, and justice of the Almighty.

By this means it frequently happens that you see persons guilty of the most atrocious crimes—crimes in their own nature the most offensive to society—that you see them living in the daily commission of the most abominable sins, under the persuasion, according to their weak understanding, that sin is all imaginary, and that what they do is no sin!

It is worth while to enquire, by what law or rule such persons guide themselves with respect to each other. They will tell you, by the rules of *honour*—or perhaps even of morality. They are sure of being happy in a world to come, and of dwelling with God, because they never did any

thing that was *dishonourable*, or immoral. That is as much as to say, that they never committed actual robbery or murder. For among these persons, who prefer the guidance of *honour*, or of any other principle, to that of religion, you will find adulterers, fornicators, the destroyers of innocence and virtue, drunkards, blasphemers, slanderers, calumniators, the revengeful and implacable, "lovers of "pleasure more than lovers of God,"—in short, you will find every thing that is *dishonourable* to the glory of God, and to the dignity of human nature. Still they are men of *honour*, ready to pierce the heart, or to blow out the brains, of any one who shall dispute it. What notions can such persons have of God, or of his dispensations—of death or of heaven?

I am afraid that all of this character will not have ignorance to plead. But whatever the opinions of men may be, the word of God, my brethren, has told us, that "all unrighteousness is sin." (1 John, v. 17.) And that "sin, when it is finished, "bringeth forth death." (James, i. 15.) The word of God assures us, that they who reject the admonitions which the Son of God has given them, and the redemption which he has offered them, "shall "not see life, but that the wrath of God "abideth on them." (John, iii. 36.) The word of God assures us, that "the fearful, "and unbelieving, and the abominable, "and murderers, and whore-mongers, and "sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, "shall have their part in the lake which "burneth with fire and brimstone." (Rev.

xxi. 8.) "Wherefore, let him that think-
"eth he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

In the last place, I would apply the words of the text to those whom I shall call real Christians—to those who have not barely been baptized into the name of Christ, but who take the Scriptures for their guide, and whose hope is in the Lord their God. Let the words of the Apostle be received by these as an exhortation to the greatest carefulness and humility. The best of men are still liable to many errors—they are subject to many weaknesses—they have their moments of coolness and forgetfulness—and are open to temptation. Let them not therefore presume upon their own opinions, or upon their own works—upon the integrity of their own hearts, or upon the rectitude of

their intentions. "For the wisdom of "this world is foolishness with God." (1 Cor. iii. 9.) And the strength of man nothing but weakness. Let him be as perfect as he can, or be his intentions never so good, he still, I say, cannot answer for the power he may have of resisting the temptations that assail him. We cannot have a stronger proof of this, than in that part of the life of the royal Psalmist which you have heard to-day.*

When the prophet related to David the pathetic story of the poor man and his ewe lamb, the similitude between it and his own transgression never struck the King of Israel. He seems not to have thought it possible that any one could be so de-

* 2 Samuel, chap. 12.

praved and wicked as the rich man is there represented. And in his zeal for justice and virtue, he does not hesitate to consign the wretch to death, who could be guilty of so atrocious an act. "As the "Lord liveth," said he, "the man that "hath done this thing shall surely die. "Because he did this thing, and because "he had no pity."

But what was the remorse and anguish of his soul, when the prophet said unto him—"Thou art the man!" And proceeded to point out the application of the fable?

This was a fine opportunity; as we read in the same chapter, "for the enemies of "the Lord to blaspheme." When, as the holy penitent complains, that even in the

midst of his mourning, " They that sat in " the gate spoke against him, and the " *drunkards* made songs upon him." (Ps. lxix. 12.

And now how frequently do we hear the profane jests of the wicked and licentious that are made upon this lamentable instance of the Psalmist's frailty. They seem to rejoice at the crime, as giving countenance to profligacy. But they seldom advert to the seriousness and painfulness of the repentance which followed it. Seldom is any notice taken of the fervent unfeigned contrition that appears in such expressions as the following: " Turn thy " face from my sins, and put out all my " misdeeds. Make me a clean heart, O " God, and renew a right spirit within " me. Cast me not away from thy pre-

'sence, and take not thy Holy Spirit 'from me. O give me the comfort of thy "help again, and stablish me with thy "free spirit. Then shall I teach thy "ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall "be converted unto thee. Deliver me "from blood-guiltiness, O God; thou, "that art the God of my health: and my "tongue shall sing of thy righteousness." (Psalm li.) It is too often forgot, that if David was, in the instance before us, an example of human weakness, he was a still brighter example of piety, and of the greatest zeal for the service of God.

This is however sufficient to show us, that the best of men cannot trust to their own strength. That it becomes them, "not to be high-minded, but to fear."— "That no man should think of himself

"more highly than he ought to think." (Rom. xi. 20. xii. 3.). It might be sufficient to check the malignity of censoriousness, and to correct the harshness with which we are too apt to judge of the conduct of others. It might be sufficient to blunt the edge of revengeful persecution, and to soften the severity of what is sometimes thought justice—if we would but consider, that while we are arraigning, or condemning, or perhaps executing vengeance upon our Christian brethren, we ourselves are far from being so upright as we ought to be, or can be. It might warn us not to measure our own righteousness by the standard of that in others. "Let "him that thinketh he standeth, take heed "lest he fall."

Let us remember, after all that can be

said in our favour, such are the indelible imperfections of our nature, that we never can *deserve* salvation. Salvation is a free gift. "By grace we are saved, through "faith. And *that* not of ourselves, it is "the gift of God. Not of works, lest any "man should boast." (Eph. ii. 8.)

Let us pray then, that the grace of God may be constantly with us, and lead us to the truth, and establish us in it. That by his mercy and grace, "whether we live, "we may live unto the Lord; or whether "we die, we may die unto the Lord" (Rom. xiv. 8.)

And "now to Him, who is of power to "stablish you according to the Gospel— "to God only wise, be glory, through "Jesus Christ for ever."

SERMON VI.

CHRIST'S PROPHECY RESPECTING THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

MATTHEW, xxiv. 12.

"*And because iniquity shall abound,*
"*the love of many shall wax cold.*"

THESE words are a part of that very remarkable and interesting discourse which our Lord held with his disciples, respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, and the final consummation of all things.

The minute fulfilment of the former of these events according as it was predicted, scarcely leaves us the possibility of doubting, but that the latter will take place in the same manner as it was foretold.

" See ye not all these things," said Jesus, upon his disciples showing Him the buildings of the temple—" verily, I say " unto you, there shall not be left here " one stone upon another, that shall not " be thrown down." (v. i.)

St. Luke extends this prediction to the destruction of the whole city. " For " the days shall come upon thee, that " thine enemies shall cast a trench about " thee, and compass thee round, and " keep thee in on every side, and shall

" lay thee even with the ground, and thy " children within thee; and they shall " not leave in thee one stone upon " another; because thou knewest not " the time of thy visitation." (ch. xix. 43, &c.)

Our Lord further observed, " and " when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed " with armies, then know that the deso- " lation thereof is nigh." (Luke, xxi. 20.)

As to the time of the fulfilment of this very remarkable prophecy, Christ remarked, " Verily I say unto you, this gene- " ration shall not pass, till all these things " be fulfilled." (v. 34.) Which was a solemn repetition to the same point — our Lord having said before—" Verily I say " unto you, all these things shall come

" upon this generation." (ch. xxiii. 36.) Επι την γενεαν ταυτην—Accordingly the event took place within forty years from the time of its having been foretold. And it is a circumstance not the least worthy of notice with respect to the temple, that from the relation of the Jewish Historian Josephus, who was an eye-witness of what he relates, the roman General Titus, (afterwards Emperor,) by whose armies the city was encompassed and destroyed; used every effort to save the sacred building. But in spite of all his exertions, it was utterly desolated.—And, as we are also told, literally ploughed over—in conformity, it should seem, with a denunciation uttered by the prophet Micah many hundreds of years before. The words of Micah are— " Therefore shall Zion," the seat of the holy temple, " for your sake,

" be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall " become heaps, and the mountain of the " house, as the high places of the forest." (Mic. iii. 12.)—Signifying that it should become overgrown with trees and a shelter for wild beasts. A circumstance, to which the records of history, and the accounts of travellers, bear ample testimony. From the fulfilment of a prophecy, so minute in all its parts, we have surely every reason to expect, that other predictions of our Saviour's will be fully accomplished. And full credit may we give to his following assertion—" Heaven and earth shall pass " away, but my words shall not pass " away." (v. 35.)

It was upon the occasion of which I have now been speaking, that his Disciples came privately to Him, as He " sat " upon the Mount of Olives, saying, tell

" us, when shall these things be? And " what shall be the sign of thy coming, " and of the end of the world?"

It has been ingeniously remarked, that three distinct questions were proposed in these words.

As, 1st.—When should the holy city be destroyed, and in particular the temple?

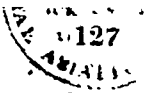
2dly.—What should be the signs of our Lord's second appearance upon the earth?

And, 3dly.—What events should portend the dissolution of the world?

But it is not so easy to separate distinct answers to each of these several questions

from our Lord's reply. It rather appears from an attentive perusal of the whole passage, and from other parts of the Gospel alluding to the same subject; that Christ's answer was general — including all the events—and probably intimating that some of the same signs might be appropriate to them all.

These however are questions of by no means so great importance, as the lesson that is to be derived from the whole relation — which is — that as certainly and minutely as the city of Jerusalem and the temple were laid waste, according to Christ's prediction, so surely will the end of this world be accomplished. This is the end and scope of my present discourse.



Upon a subject so interesting, and so connected with our religious faith and obedience, I should wish to say something that may fix it upon your attention and consideration. For this purpose, I shall endeavour to put together a few observations respecting the fate of Jerusalem, which has been accepted, by many very learned and judicious writers, as a type of the dissolution of the world—thereby confirming the notion already suggested—that our Lord's discourse embraced both these circumstances, though He seems to have made the former his principal object. In the same manner that many parts of scripture are to be considered — and as the sacred history of the Jews altogether may be looked upon, as a designation of God's designs towards mankind in general. Perpetual allusions of this nature are to be

found throughout the Gospel, and the subsequent writings of the Apostles.

I shall proceed to offer two or three instances of the minuteness of our Lord's prophecy and its fulfilment—chiefly taken from the very interesting remarks of the late learned and excellent prelate of this diocese, the Bishop of London, which I would ardently recommend to the notice of every one who wishes to be informed and enlightened upon a subject that involves his present satisfaction, and his future hopes. It is a subject therefore, that in this point of view, has been thought to deserve the closest enquiry, even as to the manner in which it was introduced—which was, by the disciples directing our Saviour's attention to the immense pile of building belonging to the temple, and to the

magnificent and surprising solidity of the structure. It appearing to them, as the Bishop observes, "as if this unrivalled "edifice was built for eternity, was form-"ed to stand the shock of ages, and to "resist the utmost efforts of human power "to destroy it." The extraordinary size and beauty of the stones even attracted their notice. In St. Mark their expression is, "Master, see what manner of stones, "and what buildings are here!" (ch. xiii. 1.) A circumstance, that at the first view, seems of little importance. But it shows in a very strong light, with what perfect fidelity and minute accuracy most things are described in the sacred writings. For it appears, from the Jewish historian Josephus, that there was scarce any thing more remarkable in this celebrated temple, than the stupendous size of the stones

with which it was constructed. Those employed in the foundations were forty cubits, that is above sixty feet, in length: and the superstructure, as the same historian observes, was worthy of such foundations; for there were stones in it of the whitest marble, upwards of sixty-seven feet long, more than seven feet high, and nine broad. So that the durability promised to vie with its grandeur. And the astonishment of the disciples may be imagined proportionate with our Lord's answer. "See ye not all those things?" said He, "verily I say unto you, there "shall not be left one stone upon another, "that shall not be thrown down." If this expression had meant nothing more than that the temple would be utterly destroyed, the prophecy would have been ac-

complished by any common demolition. "But," says the writer I have mentioned, "it so happened that this prediction was almost *literally* fulfilled; and that in reality scarce one stone was left upon another. For when the Romans had taken Jerusalem, Titus ordered his soldiers to dig up the foundations both of the city and the temple. The Jewish writers also themselves acknowledge, that Terentius Rufus,* who was "left to command the army, "did with a plough-share tare up the "foundations of the temple; according to "the prophecy of Micah already quoted. "Eusebius also, an historian of great "weight, assures us, that the temple was "ploughed up by the Romans; and that "he himself saw it lying in ruins."

* See Whitby.

The signs which were to announce this very remarkable, sudden, complete, and lasting overthrow, shall next be considered. Two or three of these shall be briefly taken as they stand in the work to which I have alluded. "Many," said our Lord, "shall come in my name, saying, I am "Christ, and shall deceive many." "This "part of the prophecy," as the Bishop observes, "began soon to be fulfilled: for "we learn from the antient writers, and "particularly from Josephus, that not "long after our Lord's ascension, several "impostors appeared, some pretending to "be the Messiah, and others to foretel "future events. The first were those "whom our Lord says should come in his "name, and were therefore false Christs. "The others are alluded to under the "name of false prophets:" "many false

" prophets shall arise, and shall deceive " many." " Of the first sort were, as " Origen informs us, one Dositheus, who " said that he was the Christ foretold by " Moses; and Simon Magus, who said " he appeared among the Jews as the Son " of God. Besides several others alluded " to by Josephus."

" The same historian tells us, that there " were many false prophets, particularly " an Egyptian, who collected above thirty " thousand Jews, whom he had deceived. " And Theudas, a magician, who said he " was a prophet, and deceived many." The same probably to whom we find Gamaliel alluding in the 5th chapter of the Acts. " For before these days rose up " Theudas, boasting himself to be some- " body; to whom a number of men,

" about four hundred, joined themselves;
" who was slain, and all, as many as
" obeyed him, were scattered and brought
" to nought." (v. 36.) Besides these, " a
" multitude of others, who deluded the
" people, even to the last, with a promise
" of help from God. And in the reign of
" Nero, when Felix was procurator of
" Judea, such a number of these impostors
" made their appearance, that many of
" them were seised and put to death every
" day.

Another sign of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem mentioned by Christ, is the following:—" ye shall hear
" of wars, and rumours of wars; for na-
" tion shall rise against nation, and king-
" dom against kingdom; and there shall
" be famines, and pestilences, and earth-

" quakes in divers places: all these are " the beginning of sorrows." It may be said, I think, without enthusiasm, that this part of the prophecy is not inapplicable to the present day. But the concurrent testimony of the most authentic histories shows us in how striking and minute a manner it was fulfilled in the age of which we are speaking. Grotius reckons up many earthquakes that happened in the reigns of Claudius and Nero, at Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Coloss. There happened in Judea, says Josephus, vehement winds, dreadful thunderings, and lightnings, and vast movings of the shaken earth, which, in the judgment of all, portended no small evil.* Seneca observes that, not only

* Whitby.

houses, or families, or single cities, but whole nations, whole countries were hurled into ruin, or swallowed up. He also mentions the destruction of twelve cities in Asia.* Similar accounts are to be met with in various authors, and they can hardly be ranked among common events.

The next sign that presents itself, is that immediately relating to the disciples, and to the early Christians. "Then shall they "deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall "kill you, and ye shall be hated of all "nations for my name's sake. They "shall deliver you up to the councils, "and in the synagogues ye shall be "beaten; and ye shall be brought before "rulers and kings for my sake, for a tes-

* Natural. Quest. l. 6. c. 1.

" timony against them."* Whoever reads the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul, will see in how minute a manner this prediction was verified. " For I think," says this Apostle in his first epistle to the Corinthians, " that God " hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it " were appointed to death; for we are " made a spectacle unto the world, and " to angels, and to men." (ch. iv. 9.) The persecutions and sufferings of the Apostles, and of Christ's first disciples, are well known to every person that is at all acquainted with the history of those times. " The very name of Christian was a crime: " and it exposed them to every species of " insult, indignity, and cruelty.† There

* Mark, xiii. 9.

† Bishop of London's Lectures.

are two more signs attending this remarkable prophecy, which I shall endeavour to put into as few words as possible. The former of these, though it has been in a great measure confined by many writers to the destruction of Jerusalem, may, as I think, from the original expression, be warrantably extended to other times, and to the final dissolution of all things. "And "the Gospel of the kingdom," said Christ, "shall be preached in all the world, for a "witness unto all nations: and then shall "the end come." It is true, that by the expression of the whole world, was meant to signify upon several occasions—the Roman Empire (*Imperium orbis terrarum.*)* Thus we are told in the 2d chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, that Augustus

* See Mede, &c. &c.

Cæsar made a decree that "all the world "should be taxed"—(πασαν την οικουμενην.) But even admitting this, a vast extent must be allowed to the phrase, since we learn from the most authentic writers, and the most antient records, that the Gospel was preached, within thirty years after the death of Christ, in Idumea, Syria, and Mesopotamia; in Media and Parthia, and many parts of Asia Minor; in Egypt, Mauritania, Ethiopia, and other regions of Africa; in Greece and Italy; as far north as Scythia, and as far westward as Spain, and in this very island which we inhabit; where there is great reason to believe Christianity was planted in the days of the Apostles, and before the destruction of Jerusalem."* But the phrase, as I have said, will allow

* Lectures,

of being rendered, "in every habitable "part of the globe—εν ολη τη οικουμενη,"—which will give it a still greater latitude.

I need hardly remark to you the amazing progress which the Gospel is making in these our days. By the zealous endeavours of the pious, in causing the Scriptures to be translated and distributed in all the living languages, and by the help of missionaries. It may be said of them, as the Psalmist says of the glorious works of the creation, "their sound is gone out "into all lands; and their words into the "ends of the world." (Psal. xix. 4.) The pains that are taken to disseminate the Gospel, and the avidity with which it is accepted by some of the greatest enemies to that dissemination, is become a striking

feature in the history of the present times.*

The last sign I shall give you nearly in the words of the learned author, to whom I have been already indebted so much. It alludes particularly to the destruction of Jerusalem, and is well worth attention, especially as it contains expressions which may not be generally or readily understood. "When ye therefore shall see," said Christ, "the abomination of desola-" tion, spoken of by Daniel the prophet,† " *stand in the holy place* (let him that read-

* The author was witness to the request of a roman catholic Priest, who belonged to a Spanish frigate, that versions of the New Testament, in Spanish, might be sent on board for the instruction of his ship's company.

† Chap. ix and xxvii.

" eth understand;) then let them that be " in Judea flee into the mountains." The meaning of this passage is clearly and fully explained by the parallel place in St. Luke—" When ye shall see Jerusalem " compassed with armies, then know that " the desolation thereof is nigh." The abomination of desolation therefore denotes the Roman army which besieged Jerusalem; and which Daniel also, in the place alluded to, calls the *abomination which makes desolate.*

The Roman army is here called an *abomination,* because upon their standards were depicted the images of their emperor and their tutelary gods, whom they worshipped: and it is well known that idols were held by the Jews in the greatest abhorrence; and the very name they gave

them was the expression here made use of, an *abomination.* The word desolation is added for an obvious reason; because this mighty army brought ruin and desolation upon Jerusalem.

This city, and the mountain on which it stood, and a circuit of several furlongs around it, were accounted holy ground. And as the Roman standards were planted in the most conspicuous places near the fortifications of the city, they are here said to "*stand in the holy place,*" or, as St. Mark has it, "to stand where they ought "not." And Josephus tells us, that after the city was taken, "the Romans brought "their ensigns into the temple, and placed "one of them against the eastern gate, "and sacrificed to them there: which "was the greatest insult and outrage that

" could be offered to that wretched peo-
" ple."

It would be difficult for any one to read the remainder of this prophecy, and the account which Josephus has given of the miseries and afflictions which befel both Jews and Christians upon that dreadful occasion, without being struck with the amazing coincidence between them. " It is impossible, one would think," says the Bishop, " even for the most stubborn infi-
" del, not to be struck with the great simi-
" larity of the two passages, and not to see
" that the prediction of our Lord, and the
" accomplishment of it, as described by
" the historian, are exact counterparts of
" each other; and seem almost as if they
" had been written by the very same per-
" son. Yet Josephus was not born till after

"our Saviour was crucified; and he was
"not a Christian, but a Jew; and certainly
"never meant to give any testimony to
"the truth of our religion."*

I must close the subject for the present, without mentioning all the circumstances that are attached to it. It was indeed principally my intention to bring this piece of Scripture history before you, and recommend it to your contemplation. And I can venture to affirm, upon the truth of the most unbiassed history, that the prophecy was fully accomplished in all its parts.

But if what has been said has no weight, there can be little reason to expect that any impression could be made by adding

* Lectures.

more. For there is no end to doubts when once they have taken possession of the mind; nor would it be easy to convince a mind that is prejudiced by the passion of incredulity. They who wish, or who think it worth while to be convinced upon any subject, must come to the task with a heart open to conviction. And upon religious matters especially they must take care not to measure the wisdom and power of God by the strength of their own imperfect judgment.

It is true, that wars and earthquakes have spread their mischief from the beginning of the world, that the assemblage of armies portends destruction and desolation; and that the afflicted and persecuted have sought a refuge from their oppressors in foreign countries, and in unin-

habited places. But when extraordinary events of this nature take place—when the time of their appearance has been absolutely pointed out—and when the circumstances attending them are found to be a description of the warning, and become as it were an echo to the prophet's voice—a reflecting mind will not be able, without violence to its understanding, to ascribe such events to the common course of nature. Besides, it was not merely the destruction of the city or the temple which our Lord predicted, but the overthrow of the Jewish government, and whole system of polity; which has never been restored. And on the ruins of which, the rock of the Christian religion has hitherto remained firm. Thus was Christ's kingdom established, and his Divine Power manifested.

The words of the text were chosen as being one of those signs which may be adapted to all times. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." The word which is here translated "iniquity," rather means lawless licentiousness—"ανομιαν," a disrespect and a contempt of all law and of all subordination—which is of itself the foundation of all wickedness. Perhaps our Saviour alluded to the iniquity of persecution that was exercised upon the first believers; and to the heretical errors which very soon crept into the Church, and which caused many to waver and to renounce their faith. Of this St. Paul complains to Timothy, that "at his first answer in defence of the Gospel, no man stood by him; but all men, that is great numbers, seeing the dangers and difficul-

ties to which he was exposed, "forsook him." (2 Pet. iv. 16.) This was making the prediction more appropriate. But it is a natural consequence at all times, when wickedness in any shape is seen to increase—and I wish I could with truth except the present times from the remark; that weak and prejudiced people are too apt to attribute such lamentable defection to the impotence and inefficacy of religion: thereby destroying the only means that can suppress the growing evil. For it is contrary to every principle of reason that the cause of religion should suffer by the wicked lives of its professors—who, the truth is, would incontestibly avoid every species of wickedness, if they lived up to the spirit of the religion which they profess.

Let me then exhort you to meditate upon the whole subject—to reflect seriously upon those confirmations of your faith in Christ Jesus, which are abundantly laid before you in the Gospel.

Let me beseech you to use the utmost caution, not to be deceived by the impunity that too often attends the dissolute, nor by the pretended indifference and skepticism of the lukewarm and unstable. But rather use every means in your power, within your own private circles, to stop the prevalence of that spirit of disobedience, and insubordination, which seems to be bursting forth among us. It is not the rant of fanaticism to say that the times are awful; and that the world is exhibiting a scene of enmity, affliction, and desolation, which has never been exceeded, if ever it

has been equalled. It seems spontaneously to direct our notice to St. Paul's Epistle to Timothy, where he says—"This "know also, that in the last days perilous "times shall come. For men shall be "lovers of their ownselves, covetous, "boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedi-"ent to parents, unthankful, unholy, with-"out natural affection, truce-breakers, "false accusers, incontinent, fierce, de-"spisers of those that are good, traitors, "heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure "more than lovers of God, having a form "of godliness, but denying the power "thereof." (2 Tim. iii. 1, &c.)

Let us pray, my Christian brethren, that our love may not wax cold, because such iniquity abounds. And "let us "hold fast the profession of our faith

" without wavering: for He is faithful that
" promised. And let us consider one
" another to provoke unto love and to
" good works. Not forsaking the as-
" sembling of ourselves together, as the
" manner of some is; but exhorting one
" another: and so much the more, as ye
" see the day approaching." (Heb. x. 23, &c.) And now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON VII.

RELIGION VINDICATED FROM THE CHARGE OF PRODUCING EVIL.

MATTHEW, XXIV. 12.

"*And because iniquity shall abound,*
"*the love of many shall wax cold.*"

IN my last discourse upon this text of Scripture, I merely mentioned it as a prediction of one of those many signs which should announce the dissolution of the Jewish government, and which might

also be adapted to the consummation of all things. I should wish to make a further use of these words, by endeavouring to correct the error of those who have at any time been inclined to charge religion with the production of evil.

I forbear to speak of Heathenish or Atheistic principles, or of the opposition that revealed religion has met with from persons of either description. It would be difficult to trace the religious opinions of those, who either admitted a plurality of gods, or of those who denied the continued uninterrupted exercise of God's power.

Confining ourselves then to the days of Christianity, it is hardly to be wondered at, that when that religion was first pro-

mulgated, many were tempted to relinquish their newly accepted faith, when they perceived the restraints, the difficulties, and dangers, to which the resolute observance of that faith had subjected them. They did not at once understand, that it is the very nature of Christ's religion to preclude the necessity of restraint—they had not learnt that "Love when it is perfect, casteth out "fear," nor did they consider that the persecution they endured, or to which they were become obnoxious, proceeded from people who were totally unacquainted with the doctrines they opposed.

Besides, the Gospel has informed us, with a faithfulness and accuracy every where apparent, that in the days of Christ, and even as it should seem, with-

in his notice — when the multitude laid their hands on Him to carry Him before Pilate, " All the disciples forsook Him, " and fled." (Matt. xvi. 56.) That is, numbers of them — and some perhaps at one time, and some at another.

Again, you may remember that I mentioned to you St. Paul's complaint to Timothy, that when he was first called upon to answer for his doctrines — " No " man stood with him, all forsook him." (2 Tim. iv. 16.) Defections of this kind have happened in all ages. And no person of sense, who had power to think and to judge for himself, would suffer such tokens of human weakness to weigh against the many solid irrefutable proofs of the truth of a divine revelation. Among which proofs, the very circumstance of

which we are speaking may be accepted as one; since a description of such apostacy is to be found in our Lord's parable of the sower, in the conduct of those persons upon whose hearts the seed is said to have fallen as upon a rock. "Who, "when they hear," said He, "receive the "word with joy: and these have no root, "who for a while believe, and in time "of temptation fall away." (Luke, viii. 13.)

Whilst we are upon this subject, I may be allowed to observe, that apostacy, that relaxation, or abandonment of religious principles once adopted, will always be found to proceed from false notions of religion, or from the most depraved principles, and by no means from any defect in the religion itself.

Some may have expected greater things from religion than it has warranted them to do — some may have imagined that their faith in Christ would exempt them from the common afflictions and calamities of life: and their disappointment has induced them, very unjustly, to think meanly of the whole system. Like Esau they have been tempted to say, "What "profit shall this birth-right do to me?" (Gen. xxv. 32.) But "What," as St. Paul observes, "if some did not believe: "shall their unbelief make the faith of "God without effect? God forbid," &c. (Rom. iii. 3.) It is the beauty and excellence of Christ's religion that it excludes every thing like compulsion — that it leaves the judgment free, that it offers no violence to the various powers of the human mind, — whilst upon all occasions

it manifests a superiority above the utmost stretch of man's wisdom.

But enthusiasts have frequently been excited, and have endeavoured to prevail upon others, to look for miracles where none was intended. — And the folly and pride of man, under the specious veil of philosophy, have made frequent attempts to reduce the determinations of unsearchable wisdom to a level with their own finite understanding.

From these, and various other causes, "Because iniquity has abounded, the "love of many has waxed cold." The word translated iniquity, I observed to you, rather, or more directly means licentiousness*— an aversion from all restraint, and

* Ανομιαν.

a daring lawless exercise of power. The taking the decisions of our own present and future fate, if I may so call it, into our own hands — as if we had a right to do what we please, in defiance of God's will. The love here mentioned, seems to be that warm and grateful attachment to God through Christ, arising from full and implicit confidence — and that benevolence and humility towards each other, which are the prominent characteristics of the Gospel dispensation. "Love "worketh no ill to his neighbour," says the Apostle, "therefore love is the fulfil- "ling of the law." (Rom. xiii. 10.)

To the opposite sources then of infidelity and superstition, and to the want of integrity and neighbourly or brotherly affection, we may look for the existence

of many of those cavils which have been raised against the Christian faith.

It is the nature of infidelity and skepticism to produce a degree of licentiousness bordering upon iniquity. And from the misapplication of freedom, infidels and skeptics have not seldom fallen into the commission of crimes subversive of all peace and happiness both to themselves and others. But surely the lives of those who deny, or who would infringe the power and supremacy of God — or who openly avow the renunciation of religious faith, will not, upon a moment's reflection, be suffered to act as an encouragement to wickedness in any shape, among those who are at all acquainted with the doctrines and precepts of Revelation. And perhaps it may be said upon the whole, that

the religion of Christ has suffered less from the attacks of the incredulous than from many other evils. Because the arguments used by people of this description, I believe I need not say generally, but universally have been found to be destitute of anything like a reasonable support. Suffer me to repeat my observation, that the badly-conducted lives, or if you please, the erroneous opinions of infidels or atheists, can never be admitted as an argument against the truth of Christ's religion, or against the truth of any religion. And let me add one other remark, which is, that they who show any inclination to circumscribe the wisdom, or the power, or the mercy of God, as they are displayed in the writings of the Old and New Testament, will, for the far greater part, be found to be such as

have not given the subject the consideration it deserves. It was the confession of one of the most daring adversaries of the Christian religion, that he had never read the Scriptures with attention.* And of another, that his doubts had involved him in the greatest misery and horror.† Surely no one who had the smallest use of reason would suffer his dependence upon Christ to be shaken, by the weak and wicked attempts of these modern pretended philosophers: whose acknowledgment of their errors was almost as extraordinary, as the promulgation of them. For what can be more ridiculous, or more degrading, than for a man, pretending to be a lover of wisdom, to be disputing upon a subject for many years — and to

* Gibbon. † Hume.

find himself at last obliged to acknowledge, not only that he knew nothing at all of the matter; but that he had not even done himself, or the world, the justice, to take the most common and simple and direct means of gaining information. At the same time, it is not, I fear, to be denied, that such persons have done much mischief. They have rendered many miserable, and have made none happy. Though it is also to be observed, that they have been very undesignedly themselves adding one link to the chain of evidence in favour of Christianity; since our Lord and his Apostles expressly forewarned the world that many such scoffers should arise, and that many should be deceived by them. (2 Pet. iii. 3, &c.) It is among the offences against revealed religion, which Christ asserted

should come. — And let us not close the subject without the mention of his severe denunciation against them — "Woe unto "the world because of offences! for it "must needs be that offences come; but "woe to that man by whom the offence "cometh." (Matt. xviii. 7.)

But enough of that incredulity which springs from prejudice and ignorance. When I say ignorance, I do not mean an absolute want of sense — but an unacquaintance with the most important subjects, and a voluntary perversion of the understanding.

Superstition and enthusiasm, which are the opposite extremes of incredulity, is another portion of that iniquity, by which many have been tempted at least to waver, if not to relinquish their faith in Christ. There have

been persons in all ages, who, like the Scribes and Pharisees of old, have attempted to lay burdens on men's shoulders too heavy to be borne;—and of which they themselves have not always been willing to take a share. And who, from the impulse of misguided zeal, have been inclined to add to the word of God, as much as the incredulous have endeavoured to diminish it, or to take from it. By adding, or diminishing, it will be obvious that I mean departing from it in either way. I will give you an instance of this in few words.

I allude to those rash and mistaken attempts some hundreds of years ago, by a combination of Christian princes, who determined upon an expedition to Judea and Jerusalem, for the purpose of rescu-

ing the Holy Land as it is called, from the hands of infidels and heretics; and putting it in the possession of Christians. These wild undertakings received the title of crusades, from their having for their object the exaltation of the cross of Christ, which was also depicted upon their shields and banners. The lives that were lost, we may say the murders that were committed upon this untoward occasion, were innumerable: And it is an event that has ever since given a handle to infidels and skeptics, to cast a stigma upon the Christian religion. See, say they, what mischief has been caused by Christianity — who can stand up in the defence of a religion that authorises usurpation and murder?*

* Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum. LUCRETIUS.

I will only make a short remark in reply to such thoughtless and ill-founded allegations.

They who were immediately engaged in this preposterous and unjustifiable enterprize, as well as they who presumptuously slander the religion of Christ, as having been the cause of it — seem entirely to have lost sight of our Lord's gentle benevolent rebuke to the Disciple who intemperately drew his sword, and cut off the ear of one of his assailants, at the moment that Judas betrayed him. "Put "up again thy sword," said Jesus, "into "his place; for all they who take the "sword, shall perish with the sword." (Matt. xxvi. 52.) It must have been entirely forgotten, that He observed with the utmost mildness and dignity upon a

like occasion before Pilate who condemned Him — "My kingdom is not of this "world; if my kingdom were of this "world, then would my servants fight, "that I should not be delivered to the "Jews: but now is my kingdom not "from hence." (John, xviii. 36.)

Compulsion and persecution are directly opposite to every principle of Christianity — and they who excite or encourage, in any way, religious feuds, are enemies to the cross of Christ, and are bringing an odium altogether undeserved upon that divine system of which they blindly call themselves the zealous advocates.

The same arguments may perhaps find a place against those who have created almost a dread of religion by the gloomy

austerity, and unnatural seclusion of their lives — and by a senseless contempt and condemnation of the numberless blessings and innocent enjoyments which the goodness of God has laid before them even in the present life. Many have been induced to turn with disgust from what they have called the bondage of religion, when they have beheld the unreasonable restraints, the groundless impositions, and the fanatical pretensions of the superstitious and enthusiastic. They have not been aware that such practices, to say the least of them, are errors in judgment — arising from a misconception of that pure and holy religion, which, while it insists upon purity of heart, a correctness and decency of manners, and an upright discharge of social duties — lays no prohibition upon harmless inoffensive indulgence.

But whilst I am saying this, let me not be thought to infer, that the impositions and exhortations, and exemplary precepts of our almighty and gracious Redeemer, are in any degree to be trifled with. And after all, let us remember what He has peremptorily told us, that "if we would "enter into life," that is, if we would hope, through his mediation, to obtain everlasting life and happiness, we must love God, "and keep his commandments." (Matt. xix. 17.)

In the last place, the iniquity that has perhaps done the greatest harm to religion, and which has had a tendency to abate the zeal and the love of many, has been that discordancy, that disagreement, too often, alas! observable, between the professions and the actual lives of numbers.

And it is an evil that may affect the greater part of those that hear me, more than any other that has been mentioned. But it is extremely unreasonable and unjust that the cause of religion should suffer, either through the hypocrisy or the carelessness of those, who as St. Paul observes to Titus, "profess that they "know God, but in works they deny "Him." (i. 16.) Our Lord has given us more than one warning against this extensive and fatal delusion, from a high source of authority and example. "The Scribes and Pharisees," said He, "sit in Moses' seat — All therefore what-"soever they bid you observe, *that* ob-"serve and do; but do not ye after their "works, for they say, and do not." (Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.)

We are not to suffer our love to wax cold, because others are deficient; or, which not unfrequently happens, bely their consciences. The love and obedience we owe to God, — the blessings and hopes which He has given us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, are subjects of the greatest moment that apply to every individual. Pernicious example, is as far removed from religion as possible — but let it come from whomsoever it will, there will be no excuse for those who follow it. We may, in some sort, have to answer for other men's crimes as well as for our own, if we suffer the influence of those crimes to controul us, and transmit the contagion to those around us. And the answer which Christ made to St. Peter upon a very different occasion, respecting the beloved Disciple St. John, may be made

applicable to this — "Lord," said he, "and what shall this man do?" "If I "will," said Jesus, "that he tarry till I "come, what is that to thee? Follow "thou me." (John, xxi. 22.) By which we may be taught, that we have no plausible reason for taking the lives of others as a rule for our conduct — but that we are to go on in the strait-forward path of duty, according to what we know and believe to be right in the sight of God.

And there is one suggestion that may not be thought unnecessary — which is, that we are very far from being capable to judge of the influences and motives by which others are actuated. We are by no means able to discriminate at all times between inadvertency and profligacy. And it is no more than truth to say, that

every casual sinner may not be a hypocrite — nor may he deserve the bitter fate of being ranked among those who bring a disgrace upon their profession. And even if we could be supposed capable of judging, the criterion of a man's life is uniformity, not casual transgressions.

Be this as it may — it is neither reasonable nor excuseable, that either partial failure, or uniform profligacy, should be received as a sanction for disobedience to the laws of heaven. And "Thou shalt "not follow a multitude to do evil," is one among those golden rules which it is the wisdom and duty of every rational being to adopt.

I trust that it will not be difficult for you to turn what has been said to your

own advantage. And for this purpose, let me conclude with exhorting you to remember in the first place, that we have a rule for our lives, both as to matters of faith and practice, stampt with the indelible marks of truth and wisdom, in those holy Scriptures, which were written "by "the inspiration of God for our admoni- "tion, and which are able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is "in Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. x. 11. 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.) And although we are not able to account for the permission of evil, we know full well that it abounds, and that it appears to arise from the very nature and constitution of man. But let us remember, that whatever we may hear or see, in the conversation or conduct of men, that is derogatory to the power, the wisdom, or the mercy of God — or that

has a tendency to destroy our own happiness; will be found to be entirely opposite to the intention or purport of the sacred writers. And wherever these effects are produced, it will be easily proved that they have been produced by a perversion of God's holy word, no less than by the abuse, or by the feeble use of that reason which He has given us, in a great measure, as an antidote, and as a corrector, of the evil that exists. And I believe I may assert it, as an incontrovertible truth, that incredulity, which tends to lessen the power and goodness of God — that superstition which has extended the power and the will of God to acts and notions of frantic absurdity,—and that sin, which in every way is directly contrary to God's will, never produced happiness, or anything like it. — Let us then be hum-

bly thankful for those means which God has been graciously pleased to put into our hands, of learning our duty to Him, to each other, and to ourselves. And by which He has also afforded us the possibility of working out our own salvation "through faith," as the Apostle says, "in "Christ Jesus."—And let us pray that the whole race of mankind may be united in that bond of piety towards God, and of sincere love towards each other, which will counteract the progress of iniquity, and promote our happiness in this world, and in that which is to come.—And now to God the Father, &c. &c.

SERMON VIII.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

MATTHEW, XXV. 29.

"*For unto every one that hath, shall*
"*be given; and he shall have abun-*
"*dance: but from him that hath*
"*not, shall be taken away, even that*
"*which he hath.*"

THE parable of the talents, of which these words are the conclusion, is related in much the same manner, in the 19th

chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. As it seems to be made rather more general, in this chapter of St. Matthew, I have chosen his relation. And more particularly, because the doctrine which it contains, is here corroborated by two other parables or illustrations, of the ten virgins, and the separation of the sheep from the goats: that is, of the careful and obedient, from the negligent and disobedient, at the day of judgment.

I shall consider the scope and intention of the parable, adding such general illustrations as may be collected from it.

The main scope and end of this parable seems to be that of instructing us, that all men are called or invited by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to a state of salvation and of

future happiness. Not to a state of happiness that was never before intended or appointed, but that was more clearly laid open by the Gospel. And that all are capable, that is, have sufficient means afforded them, of "pleasing God," of "walking worthy of their vocation," and "of "working out their own salvation" in a great measure; and that they are expected to do so. It will appear that these means are not the same, in all men, that is, not in the same degree or proportion in all men—but that they may be made efficient by all, and are apportioned to the various states and conditions of mankind; according to the wisdom, and admirable economy of the present life. And that the justice of God will be displayed in the final sentence to be pronounced upon the use which men have made of the powers

and faculties which have been granted them.

In the account which men shall give—or in whatever way they may be supposed to be accountable for their lives, there will be little or no excuse for moderate abilities, for want of light, or for ignorance; since God will look to the improvement, or to the neglect of those graces and opportunities, which it can be proved they have actually possessed. He will not expect fruit from that field which has received no culture. But let us recollect, that as far as such a field may be made applicable to the human mind; such total barrenness is hardly to be found. At least it must be confessed, that it is not to be admitted among Christians—or among those to whom the revelation of God's will

has been made known. And to these the parable seems to have been particularly addressed.

That there are some extraordinary deplorable instances of apparent partial ignorance to be observed, cannot perhaps be absolutely denied. But the question will be, how came it? Might not the person in whom it is observed, have known better. Has not the tree been dug round and manured. (Luke, xiii. 8.) However, this is an after consideration — let us hasten to the parable. It is necessary that I repeat it. "The Kingdom of Heaven," said our Lord, "is as a man travelling "into a far country, who called *his own* "*servants*, and delivered to them his goods. "And unto one he gave five talents, to "another two, and to another one—to

" every man *according to his several abili-*
" *ties,** and straitway took his journey.
" Then he that had received the five
" talents, went and traded with the same,
" and made them other five talents. And
" likewise he that had received two, he
" also gained other two. But he that had
" received one, went and digged in the
" earth, and hid his lord's money. After
" a long time, the lord of those servants
" cometh and reckoneth with them. And
" so he that had received five talents,
" came and brought other five talents,
" saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me
" five talents: behold, I have gained be-
" sides them five talents more. His lord
" said unto him, well done, thou good and
" faithful servant; thou hast been faithful

* Κατα την ιδιαν δυναμιν.

" over a few things, I will make thee ruler
" over many things; enter thou into the
" joy of thy Lord.

" He also that had received two talents,
" came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst
" unto me two talents; behold, I have
" gained two other talents besides them.
" His lord said unto him, well done, good
" and faithful servant; thou hast been
" faithful over a few things, I will make
" thee ruler over many things—enter thou
" into the joy of thy Lord.

" Then he who had received the one
" talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee,
" that thou art a hard man, reaping where
" thou hast not sown, and gathering where
" thou hast not strawed: and I was
" afraid, and went and hid thy talent in

" the earth—lo, there thou hast that is
" thine. His lord answered and said un-
" to him, thou wicked and slothful ser-
" vant; thou knewest that I reap where I
" sowed not, and gather where I had not
" strawed: thou oughtest therefore to
" have put my money to the exchangers,
" and then at my coming, I should have
" received my own with usury. Take
" therefore the talent from him, and give
" it unto *him* that hath ten talents. For
" unto every one that hath, shall be given,
" and he shall have abundance; but from
" him that hath not, shall be taken away
" even that which he hath. And cast ye
" the unprofitable servant into outer dark-
" ness — there shall be weeping and
" gnashing of teeth."

I have repeatedly observed to you, that

the kingdom of heaven is used, by an extent and figure of speech, to denote the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, the Gospel, or the doctrine of Christ, and even the presence or the person of Christ himself. Whatever relates to the doctrine of Christ, relates to the kingdom of God, or of Heaven; the Gospel, or the doctrine of Christ being the way, or the road to it. And the manner in which our Lord had just ended the parable of the ten virgins, among whom the foolish, as you may remember, neglected to supply themselves with oil for their lamps, shows that in this parable he meant to continue the allusion to himself, and to the fate of mankind in general. "Watch therefore," said he, "for ye know neither the day nor the hour "wherein the son of man cometh." (v. 13.) And then he goes on, "For the kingdom

" of Heaven is as a man travelling into a " far country,"—where it is easy to discern, that the man so travelling is Christ himself: who after his resurrection, ascended up into Heaven; "to receive for himself " a kingdom," as St. Luke relates it—leaving behind him peculiar blessings and promises, with an assurance that He would come again at the end of the world to judge all men. Before his departure, " he called to him his own servants, and " delivered to them his goods." It is a minute enquiry, who are meant by his own servants—whether it was particularly the Apostles, or his own immediate Disciples, or Christians in general. The scope of the parable, as I have said, is unconfined —and so I shall use it.

But what are the goods which He deli-

vered to them? goods are possessions—to a great latitude, according to the word here used — υπερχοντα — he delivered to them, in short, such things as he possessed—such things as he had to give. But money is here specified—talents—an improveable commodity—the most so perhaps, in itself, of any single commodity that could be mentioned, if it be properly used. And the most useless, worthless, pernicious commodity, if it be not properly managed. It was a deposit therefore of great trust and trial.

But what goods, or possessions had Christ to distribute in trust ere he departed, to which these talents might in some way allude? We know that he left peace as a legacy to his disciples. "Peace," said he, "I leave you—my peace I give

" unto you." (John, xiv. 27.) Peace and joy, in the Holy Ghost. The peace arising from the conscientious discharge of Christian duties. " When he ascended " up on high," as we read in St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, " he led cap- " tivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (ch. iv. 8.) But these gifts were immediately and manifestly of a miraculous and spiritual nature. And so indeed are all the powers, the faculties, the endowments, (the ὑπερχονία) to be esteemed, which God has vouchsafed to man. For man has truly nothing that he can call his own. Whatever he possesses in common with his fellow men, or whatever excellences he may enjoy, must all ultimately be ascribed to God. There is no occasion here for pride or vain glory. Human wisdom must in this sense own itself to be folly.

" For who maketh thee," as St. Paul again observes, " to differ from another? " And what hast thou, that thou didst not " receive? Now if thou didst receive it, " why dost thou glory as if thou hadst " not received? (1 Cor. iv. 7.)

Now whatever gifts, powers, faculties, blessings, endowments, God has bestowed upon mankind; Christ had, and has, the same at his disposal. " All things that " the Father hath are mine." (John, xvi. 15.) " All power is given unto me in " heaven and in earth." (Matt. xxviii. 18.)

The scope of the parable then will allow me to make an allusion from the talents, to the several qualities or acquirements, for which man is beholden to his Maker. These I shall call the gifts of God, and

shall endeavour to put them into a small compass.

Some of these gifts are common—such is the Gospel itself for instance, which is offered to all men. But the gifts of the Holy Ghost are spoken of in that Gospel as being various and peculiar upon many occasions; as to the Apostles and first teachers of Christianity. Not to say, but that they do remain so occasionally.

Some of God's gifts are intellectual merely, and immediately attached to the mind. Others are more immediately confined to the body. Let us put them together in a more general view; and say, that God has given to all men reason, conscience, understanding, thought, reflection, discrimination, decision—He has placed

him already in a world of incomprehensible glory and admiration—and has lifted his mind to expectations still more glorious and more incomprehensible. He has made him a little lower than the angels, to crown him, if he shall be found to deserve it, with glory and honour. (Psalm viii.) These are the circumstances which make him responsible for his conduct—these are the talents entrusted to him for a time, and for the use of which he will be called to account, when his master, or his lord shall return.

But as according to the divine disposition or economy which we behold in the world, there are various states and conditions of men—so these gifts of God are variously distributed in different degrees and proportions, according as men are

fitted to receive them, or as their exigences may require. And one man has five talents, another two, and another one. All surely fitted and designed, more or less, to show forth the glory of God, and to promote the happiness of themselves and others.

The question therefore will be, to every one, what use have you made of the natural powers and abilities that have been committed to your care? Those pre-eminent qualities and endowments which mark the distinction between you and the brutes that perish? What use have you made of the degree of reason, of understanding, of comprehension, of knowledge, that has been afforded you? Have you endeavoured to increase or, to improve your stock, be it great or small? Have

you endeavoured to become wiser and better, according to the means that you have had in yourself—or according to the opportunities that have come in your way? To leave nothing out that may be useful—let us imagine the lowest degree of human comprehension or knowledge. Let us look to the man who merely knows right from wrong. And few surely, in a civilized country—not one among those that hear me, can be supposed destitute of so much knowledge as this. Self-love, self-interest, will teach it to every man. And has *he* endeavoured to do what he *knew* to be right, has he abstained from what he *knew* to be wrong, as far as he has been able? For this one talent he will be accountable to the God that made him—for from that God he received it in trust!

The argument will admit of higher considerations, which will make the powers or qualities I have mentioned appear to be of the most inconceivable import and value—and will show the danger of neglecting or despising them to be the greatest that can be imagined. For they will appear to be nothing less than the emanations or productions of God's holy spirit. Reason, conscience, reflection, choice, determination, — are intellectual qualities, they are the endowments or operations of the mind. And what will you call them but spiritual endowments? "There are "diversities of gifts," says the Apostle, "but the same spirit. And there are dif- "ferences of administrations, but the "same Lord. And there are diversities "of operations, but it is the same God "who worketh all in all. But the mani-

" festation of the spirit is given to every
" man to profit withal. For to one is
" given by the spirit the word of wisdom;
" to another, the word of knowledge, by
" the same spirit—to another faith, by the
" same spirit—to another, the working of
" miracles—to another, prophecy—to ano-
" ther discerning of spirits—to another,
" divers kinds of tongues—to another, the
" interpretation of tongues. But all these
" worketh that one and the self-same
" spirit, dividing to every man severally as
" he will."

Though there may be some peculiarities in this portion of Scripture, attached to the promulgation of the Gospel, I think, that in this 12th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul has designed to instruct us, that the spirit of God is gene-

rally diffused to all men, certainly to all Christians. This is more clearly made known to us in the Gospel, than it was before—where Christ, the author of the Gospel, and clearly the Dispenser of spiritual gifts, is said to be "the true light, "which lighteth every man that cometh "into the world." (John, i. 9.)

But in whatever way the blessings of God are to be received, they surely are not to be slighted. Neither were the energies of the mind, nor the powers of the body given us for nothing. No man can deny that he possesses both—and that the former are eminently the superior, and principally demanding his care and attention, as being the directors of the other.

But if the revelation of God's will, con-

firmed by reason, is disregarded—if reason itself, the torch of the human mind, is exploded—if conscience is lulled asleep—if reflection is laid aside—if knowledge is despised—if the lowest or the least in short, of God's provisions are overlooked and buried in the earth, mankind, for whose profit and happiness they have been variously and wisely distributed, are in the same state, or in a worse state, than if they had them not. As the riches of a miser, locked up in a chest, are completely useless to himself and others:* or as any possessions, ill-managed, are in most, if not in all respects, more pernicious, than beneficial: and serve only to make the possessor more criminal and contemptible than he would have been without them.

* Deest, quia non utitur.

Thus the man who had the one talent entrusted to him, was condemned, not so much for making an ill use of it; as because he did not do with it what he *could*. "Take therefore," said our Lord, "the "talent from him, and give it unto him "that hath ten talents," and who hath shown himself deserving of it. "For "unto every one that hath, shall be given, "and he shall have abundance: but from "him that hath not, shall be taken away, "even that which he hath."

Diligence and care are as necessary in our spiritual concerns, as in those of a temporal or worldly nature—and carry with them a more certain and a higher reward; a reward founded upon the clear and express promises of God—inasmuch as the object is of far greater moment, and

more congenial with his nature. And they who use the sense and the abilities which God has given them, to his honour and glory, shall obtain assistance in their endeavours, and shall secure the salvation of their souls. But let us remember, that assistance is not compulsion, and therefore the careless, the indifferent, the lukewarm, and the wilfully ignorant, shall receive the just recompense of their wickedness and folly.

He who despises the mercy of God, as it is displayed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ—He who derides the sacred impositions of religious worship—He who denies the influence of God's grace upon his heart—He who is insensible to the constant communication that exists between God and the world—He who considers

all merit as his own, who scorns the powers imparted to him from on High, and dares to challenge the judgment of his creator—He who is unconscious of his duty to please God, and thinks it unnecessary or superstitious to do so—He who does not allow that he is bound, as a rational creature, to improve his understanding and knowledge by every means in his power—And who thus refuses to support the elevated character assigned him in life—He who is thus blind to the gracious condition in which the wisdom and goodness of God has placed him—All these must look for the sentence that will be pronounced upon them who "have received the grace of God in vain." (2 Cor. vi. 1.) "Cast ye the unprofitable "servant into outer darkness; there shall "be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (v. 30.)

How then will *they* interpret this parable, who are apt perhaps from false notions of humility, to depreciate human nature; and who endeavour to disseminate the dangerous and pernicious doctrine, that man can do nothing towards obtaining his own salvation? If indeed it could be supposed that man were a being containing in himself the principles of life, independent of his maker—in that abstracted sense, his manifest weakness might lead us to allow that he could do nothing in a concern of such unspeakable magnitude and wonder. But he is enabled, by the invisible, incomprehensible energies of his mind, to know his duty, and by the proper exertion of those same spiritual energies, he is enabled to perform it. "God," says the Apostle, "hath not "called us unto uncleanness, but unto

" holiness. He therefore that despiseth, " despiseth not man, but God; who hath " also given unto us his holy spirit." (1 Thess. iv. 7, 8.) God also has declared himself not to be that austere and hard judge, who expects to reap where he did not sow, or to gather where he had not strewed. It is for the opportunities a man clearly and actually possesses that he will be accountable, and according as he improves or neglects these opportunities, his fate will be determined. Supposing that God *were* that rigid exactor complained of in the parable; the more severe he is expected to be in his judgments, the more careful and zealous will it behove us to be. But no man can presume or venture to imagine, that God looks for an obedience that is impossible. It may be said of religious obedience, that obedience which we

owe to God; as of charity—" if there be " first a willing mind, it is accepted ac- " cording to that a man hath, and not " according to that he hath not." (2 Cor. viii. 12.) The least opportunity, well used, will be placed to his credit. Every act of goodness, of virtue and morality, that is practised from a sincere desire of pleasing God, will be so accepted. Our Lord, who is the dispenser of life and death, has assured us, that every act of kindness, of mercy, or of justice, shewn towards our fellow-creatures, that proceeds from the love of God and of virtue, will be estimated as if shown towards himself. " Inas- " much as ye have done it unto one of the " least of these my brethren, ye have done " it unto me." On the contrary, they who in any way, or in any degree, withhold the good which it is in their power to commu-

nicate, are described as robbing God of his honour and glory, and as denying Him that tribute of praise and worship which it is their duty to pay Him.

Let us then endeavour to learn what we *can* do in the great work of salvation. Let us remember that the word of God is before us; and that we have reason and conscience for our guides. Let us not attempt to shelter ourselves under the plea of ignorance or inability. Let us be much more careful to avoid the imputation of idleness or indifference. Let us learn to put a just value upon the mercies that surround us; zealously striving to please God, and to live, as our judgment and reflection will convince us becomes those who are taught by the voice of divine truth and reason, to look forward to a day of solemn

retribution. So that when our Lord and Master shall return in his glory to be the judge of quick and dead, we may hope to receive from his lips the divine commendation of " well done, good and faithful " servant, enter thou into the joy of thy " Lord." And now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON IX.

THE NECESSITY OF EXERTION IN THE CAUSE OF RELIGION.

EPHESIANS, vi. 10.

"*Finally, my brethren, be strong in*
"*the Lord, and in the power of*
"*his might.*"

MY last discourse was explanatory of one of our Lord's parables, intending to show, that the Christian religion justly requires the exertion of those powers or

endowments which are severally granted to man, and which constitute a part of his nature. That parable also taught us, that such exertion would be accepted and assisted, in proportion as it was made with zeal and sincerity.

It will now be my endeavour to add a few arguments upon the necessity of exerting ourselves in the cause of religion, as well on account of the blessings that are promised us, as of the obstacles and obstructions which will unavoidably come in our way.

It will require but little consideration to be convinced, that the present life is a life of trial. The nature of things, as we find them, makes it so. The commandments of God themselves — the du-

ties belonging to man as a rational creature — and as a being formed for society — the changes and vicissitudes of life — the diseases and accidents of the body to which we are liable — the different states and conditions that prevail among us — the different tempers and dispositions in ourselves and others that we shall have to combat — these, and many other circumstances justify the observation, that this life is a life of trial. The Scriptures speak of it as a struggle — a warfare* — And they who are inclined and determined to do their duty as children of God, as members of Christ, and as inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven, meet with many interruptions and impediments; and will find sufficient occasion for all the care

* Στρατεια—Πειρατηριον—Ταπεινωσις.

and attention that they can possibly bestow.

We are called upon to endure — that is, to endeavour to go through life with patience, steadiness, and perseverance. And to depend, for the reward of our obedience, upon the promises of God. These promises relate to the enjoyments of everlasting happiness in a world to come, purchased and insured to us by the death of Jesus Christ — and to that comfort and assistance which will be afforded us, and for which we are to look, through Him, in the mean time.

Thus St. Paul, in that part of his epistle to the Ephesians from which I have chosen my subject, after the mention of the duties incumbent upon chil-

dren, upon parents, upon masters, and upon servants — advising that all be performed "Not with eye-service as men-"pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, "doing the will of God from the heart — "with good will doing service as to the "Lord, and not to men — Knowing," says he, "that whatsoever good thing any "man doeth, the same shall he receive "of the Lord, whether he be bond or "free" — comes then to the text, where he points out those means by which we shall be supported in the performance of our duty. "Finally, my brethren, be "strong in the Lord, and in the power "of his might." Put your dependence, your confidence, upon God; and in that mercy and assistance by which He has shown Himself able and willing to comfort and support you, in the person of

Jesus Christ. By Him acts were performed, exceeding the powers of human nature — by Him diseases were cured, and the dead were raised — by the doctrine of his Gospel, and by his own resurrection from the dead, "He hath brought "life and immortality to light" — By Him the miraculous gift of unknown languages was conferred — By Him Apostles and martyrs were enabled to meet death joyfully. Such is the power of *his* might in whom we are exhorted to place our trust.

The Apostle then goes into a strain of allegory, and with the use of images or figures of speech, which are allowable in public addresses or exortations, and which are considered as the beauties and graces of oratory,—"Put on," says he,

" the whole armour of God, that ye may
" be able to stand against the wiles of
" the devil. For we wrestle not against
" flesh and blood, but against princi-
" palities, against powers, against the
" rulers of the darkness of this world,
" against spiritual wickedness in high
" places. Wherefore take unto you the
" whole armour of God, that ye may be
" able to stand in the evil day, and
" having done all, to stand. Stand there-
" fore, having your loins girt about with
" truth, and having on the breast-plate of
" righteousness; and your feet shod with
" the preparation of the Gospel of peace;
" above all, taking the shield of faith,
" whereby ye shall be able to quench all
" the fiery darts of the wicked. And
" take the helmet of salvation, and the
" sword of the spirit, which is the word

" of God. Praying always with all " prayer and supplication in the spirit, " and watching thereunto with all per- " severance, and supplication for all " saints."

The little explanation which this passage of Scripture may need, will be drawn from a more minute inquiry into the nature of those circumstances which oppose and obstruct our religious obedience.

The enemies of our salvation — the impediments that come in the way of our religious duties, and prevent us from maintaining that submission and service which we owe to God, may be said to be internal and external. They are within, and without. They arise from the impulses or impressions of our own minds,

and from the solicitations and incitements of the world: to which may be added many accidental or adventitious causes. They are called, in the language of Scripture, the allurements, or the temptations of the world, the flesh, or the devil. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the "eyes, and the pride of life." (1 John, ii. 16.) And they are so intermixed, so interwoven, so connected one with the other, that it is not easy to separate them. But they *are* to be separated — And it will be allowed that those which are within are the more dangerous. Such as spring from bad dispositions — evil propensities — low, mean, selfish, unwarrantable desires. "For from within," said Christ, "out of the heart of men, proceed evil "thoughts, adulteries, fornications, mur- "ders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness,

" deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye,
" blasphemy, pride, foolishness — All
" these evil things come from within, and
" defile the man." (Mark, vii. 21, &c.)—
They betray a depraved mind and a corrupted heart. And if the sources of all our actions are thus contaminated, it is in vain to expect pure and salutary streams.

It has therefore been well observed, that the greatest enemies or foes to a man's peace, are those which he carries about him. But if the mind be well furnished, and well directed, outward or worldly attractions will have little or no weight with him. Our own inclinations and propensities therefore require the first and the chief care.

The mere worldly temptations and al-

lurements that seduce us from our duty — and that endanger both our present and future happiness; are perhaps to be included in that one sentence of St. John's, where he speaks of them as "the lust of "the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the "pride of life." Such as sensuality, intemperance, pleasure, vanity. An excessive desire,* and an over fondness of those fading evanescent things that administer to the body, and gratify and complete the wishes of the outward man — superabundant wealth, titles, honours, power. They are well described as the pride, the vanity, or the folly of life. And where these are suffered to be predominant; where they are made the ruling principle; where they are set up as the idols of the heart;

* Επιθυμια.

experience shows us that the love of God and of religion will seldom find a place. They are beneath a wise man's care — they are incompetent to the satisfaction of a good man. When Solomon tells us that they are vanity and vexation of spirit — let us recollect that he had tried them — and therefore he was a good judge. As they who have been overtaken by sin, often become the best advocates for virtue; and the most deserving our attention.

But the Scriptures seem to lay the greatest stress upon those circumstances in which the mind may be said to be principally and more immediately concerned — they guard us against carelessness, indifference, idleness, and incredulity. These are strong symptoms of a vitiated mind.

They are innate defects — mental diseases — and invariably produce a train of badly-disposed affections. And as most of the evils of life originate from these, especially those evils which affect the soul, they may well go under the name of spiritual enemies. Hence the Apostle observes that "We wrestle not against flesh and blood; "but against principalities, against powers, "against the rulers of the darkness of this "world, against spiritual wickedness, or "against the spiritual things of wickedness in high places"* — which may be received in part, as a description of those mischiefs and evils which spring from the superior part of man's nature; and that is, his mind. The root of all his actions — the fountain of all his determinations.

* Τα πνευματικα της πονηριας.

" Either," therefore said Christ, " make " the tree good, and its fruit good; or " else make the tree corrupt, and its fruit " corrupt: for the tree is known by its " fruits." (Matt. xii. 33.) It is as impossible for a depraved deluded mind to produce a life that shall be applauded by good men, and approved by the God of heaven, as for a corrupt tree to bring forth good fruit.

The remedy to be applied to these evils and disorders of human nature, or the only preventive against the growth of them, must be of a nature similar to their own. If they seize upon the mind, the mind must resist them. If they originate there, there must we look for an antidote to their effects. In short, if the enemies of our peace are spiritual, we must op-

pose them by spiritual efforts. Thus St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "For "the weapons of our warfare are not "carnal, but mighty, through God, to "the pulling down of strong holds. Cas- "ting down imaginations, and every high "thing that exalteth itself against the "knowledge of God, and bringing into "captivity every thought, to the obedience "of Christ." (2 Cor. x. 4, 5.)

The prospects and promises of the Christian religion have been found, upon the minutest enquiry, to be perfectly congenial, and in unison, with the nature of man. If indeed it offered anything new, or unfathomable by reason, it would be the part of wisdom to receive it; considering the innumerable and undoubted testimonies in its favour, and the full,

clear, unshaken, connected, evidence on which it stands.

But let us shut the book, and consider what we are; and then see if the word of God be not thoroughly adapted to all our conceptions. Capable, we find ourselves, of good and evil, aware of the nature and consequences of both, even in a moral point of view; but *not compelled* to either. Conscious of the punishment that is due to sin and iniquity, and of the merit that is attached, and of the recompense that is due to integrity and virtue. — But taught by experience, that the decisions respecting either, are not invariably to be expected on earth. Surrounded by a variety of accidents, and occasions of affliction and distress, from which neither the utmost extent of human

wisdom, nor the utmost efforts of human virtue can exempt us.

Besides this, it is impossible to consider at all the state of mankind, without adverting to his expectation of futurity. And with regard to every thing that relates to this, his weakness is his most prominent feature. As far as he himself is concerned, the grave is the conclusion of all his power. But let any man, say, if all his hopes and fears are buried there? — Under all these circumstances, the word of God will be found to be perfectly suited, in every respect, to all our wants — to all our deficiences — and to all our expectations. It adds strength to the endeavours of the virtuous — it unfolds the page of comfort to the penitent — it offers relief to the afflicted — and

reveals the glories of heaven to the sincere and humble believer. God has given sufficient evidence of his power in the works of the creation — He has there shown Himself to be worthy of the utmost trust and confidence that the religion of Christ exhorts us to repose in Him. Let us then, " my brethren, be strong in the " Lord, and in the power of his might."

Other motives for a stedfast and holy confidence in God, may be derived from that influence which the divine Revelation of his will almost imperceptibly has upon the minds of those who can be induced to accept it. Look at the different conduct of mankind according to this rule — Take me a murderer — a thief, a cheat, a drunkard, a censualist, a liar, a blasphemer — Take the proud — the malici-

ous—the revengeful—Sound them—and see what share they possess of the love of God or of religion. You will scarcely discover the smallest particle. You will find that they either have never been taught it, or that vicious propensities and habits have totally overcome it. But look among those who believe in God, and who trust to his mercies through Jesus Christ —they who, as our Lord said, "having "heard the word, keep it"*—And among them you will not perceive any of those vices that degrade human nature, and that are the disturbers of social intercourse. Err indeed they may—but the influence of their example in general will be found to preponderate on the side of piety and virtue.

* Luke, viii. 15.

To sum up the main intention of the present discourse, I conclude with the following observations.

Since much wickedness and evil is to be found in the world — since all men are capable of it, and none are perfect — since we have to combat the evil that we see in others, as well as that to which we are prone ourselves; and have to guard against bad example, as well as against our own bad inclinations and erroneous opinions—It is the part of wisdom to look out for a defence against sin, and for a remedy that shall make up for our unavoidable errors and imperfections. The doctrines of Christ proposes both; as well as a mitigation of those trials to which all are more or less liable, and from some of which no one is exempt. Such

as sickness, poverty, disappointments, the separation of friends by death: with many others of a like nature which it would be tedious to enumerate. Our religion teaches us, that God has been graciously pleased, in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to provide a sufficient counterbalance against them all. And these offers are sententiously contained in the exhortation of the text — "Be strong in "the Lord, and in the power of his "might."

To be strong in the Lord, we must be sensible of his power — and to own God's power, is indeed nothing more than to own what it were the greatest folly and ingratitude to deny. His power includes his other attributes of wisdom, justice and mercy — and in proportion as our

minds are impressed with becoming notions of the divine nature, they will be fitted to receive the advantage of those benefits, which the religion of Christ, and that only, can confer.

To be strong in the Lord, we must have confidence in his power — and confidence cannot exist, or be maintained, between two natures of opposite qualities. If then we would trust in God, we must endeavour to resemble Him. And hence the Gospel exhorts us to lay the foundation of our obedience upon the rock of truth and sincerity — to follow after righteousness — to take the word of God for our guide — to encourage faith in its doctrines — and to be aware of deceiving ourselves with false notions of religion, or of being deceived by others — to keep

before us the prospect of eternal happiness — to feed and animate our own endeavours with the promises of spiritual assistance — and to renew our dependence upon God by frequent prayer, and by a devout compliance with those specific rules of worship which Christ Himself has prescribed; especially that which He ordained, not only as a memorial of his love towards us, but as a means of exciting in us the just return of love and attachment towards Him.

This is a short description of what St. Paul calls the whole armour of God. Here we shall find a defence against the encroachments of sin in ourselves, as well as against the influence and danger of bad example in others. Here too we shall find a palliative for those evils and trials

which are indivisible from our present condition. Dependence upon God will be allowed to be the readiest way to those succours that are to be derived from the necessary virtues of patience and contentment. For he who has learnt to bear affliction quietly, and to accept it as the dispensation of infinite wisdom, which oftner wounds to save than to destroy, has already blunted the sharpness of its arrows.

The truth and advantage of these doctrines are only to be obtained by diligence, resolution, and perseverance. They who put themselves above the instruction and the help which God has afforded them, and who think that they can trust for peace in this life, and for the enjoyment of everlasting peace in a

life to come, to human contrivance or wisdom; may be convinced of their mistake, if they are to be convinced, by one consideration — and that is, the undeniable imperfection and uncertainty of every thing belonging solely to man: "But the "Lord," as says St. Paul, "is faithful, "who shall stablish you, and keep you "from evil. Be strong then in the Lord, "and in the power of his might."

SERMON X.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

ROMANS, i. 1.

" *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called*
" *to be an Apostle, separated unto*
" *the Gospel of God.*

THERE are few circumstances mentioned in the Holy Scriptures that more deserve our notice than the life and conversion of St. Paul. It is a testimony

to the truth of Christianity, which, if impartially considered, the strongest prejudice will hardly be able to resist it. St. Paul was born and educated a Jew — he was a man of great attainments — zealous to a degree of bigotry in the religion of his forefathers — but he became converted to the Christian faith — and was beheaded at Rome as a martyr to that faith by order of the Emperor Nero.

It is of this great Apostle that I mean to speak to you. And I have chosen the words of the text, as being peculiarly descriptive of his character. "Paul, a "servant of Jesus Christ, *called* to be an "Apostle, *separated* unto the Gospel of "God."

He became indeed a sincere and zealous

" servant of Jesus Christ" — he was literally and undeniably *called* to be an Apostle — and appeared, in an extraordinary manner, to be " separated " — *chosen* — *set apart* — for the defence " of the Gos- " pel of God. "

The first mention of St. Paul is in the 7th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where we find him taking an active part in the martyrdom of St. Stephen, and holding the cloaths of those who were stoning that holy Apostle.

Soon after, so full of rancour and prejudice was he against the converts to Christianity, that he desired the high priest would give him letters to the synagogues at Damascus, " that if he found any of this way, whether they were

" men or women, he might bring them " bound to Jerusalem." (Acts, ix. 2.) It was in the execution of this errand of bigotry and intolerance, that God thought fit to change his heart, and to shew him his error — And, for the confirmation of the Gospel, to cause *him*, who had been its most inveterate and determined enemy, to become, on a sudden, its greatest advocate.

Immediately after his conversion he began to preach the Gospel — And first in the very city of Damascus, whither he had gone for the sole purpose of persecuting the Christians, " He preached " Christ in the synagogues, that He is " the Son of God." (chap. ix. 20.)

From this time, in his labours, his tra

vels, and his bodily sufferings, he appears to have exceeded all the Apostles. We find him at Jerusalem, at Athens, at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Malta, at Sicily, at Naples, at Puzzoli, at Philippi, and Rome; besides a variety of other places of inferior note.* During this life of fatigue and hazard, detested and persecuted in his turn by those of his own nation, and with a weakly constitution,† he underwent scourgings, imprisonment, ship-wreck, with every accumulation of poverty and distress. "But I rejoiced in "the Lord greatly," as he says in his Epistle to the Philippians, "that now "at the last your care of me hath flou-

* There is reason to believe that both St. Paul and Peter visited the British islands.

† See Jortin on this subject.

" rished again; wherein ye were also
" careful, but ye lacked opportunity.
" Not that I speak in respect of want;
" for I have learned, in whatsoever state
" I am, therewith to be content. I know
" both how to be abased, and I know
" how to abound, every where, and in
" all things, I am instructed, both to be
" full, and to be hungry, both to abound,
" and to suffer need. I can do all things
" through Christ, who strengtheneth me."
(chap. iv. 10, &c.)

No man ever more completely fulfilled the warning which our Lord gave his Apostles and Disciples of the treatment they should meet with, than St. Paul; in being delivered up to councils, and to synagogues, and in being brought before rulers and kings — even to the bitter pre-

diction of being put to death by those, who might think that they did God service by such instances of injustice and cruelty. (Mark, xiii. 9. John, xvi. 2.) But as Christ, at the same time remarked — these very acts of cruelty and injustice, served as a testimony of the truth of that holy religion on account of which they were inflicted, by their having been so minutely foretold.

We will now take St. Paul's own account of himself. The first relation of this kind, was to a concourse of people at Jerusalem, who had violently assaulted him, and to whom, when silence could be obtained, he thus addressed himself: I am verily a man who am a Jew — born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia — (a citizen, as he had just before observed,

" of no mean city) — yet brought up in " this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, and " taught according to the perfect manner " of the law of the fathers, — and was " zealous towards God, as ye all are " this day. And I persecuted this way " unto the death, binding and delivering " into prisons both men and women. (Acts, xxii. 3, 4.) — Immediately after, being brought before the council, he observes, " Men and brethren, I have lived " in all good conscience before God un- " til this day." (chap. xxiii. 1.) Again, in his very interesting defence before king Agrippa, which you will find in the 26th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles — he makes the following declaration — " My manner of life from my youth, " which was at the first among mine own " nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews.

" Who knew me from the beginning (if
" they would testify) that after the most
" straitest sect of our religion, I lived a
" Pharisee.

" I verily thought with myself, that I
" ought to do many things contrary to
" the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which
" thing I also did in Jerusalem. And
" many of the Saints did I shut up in
" prison, having received authority from
" the chief priests. And when they
" where put to death, I gave my voice
" against them. And I punished them
" oft in every synagogue, and compelled
" them to blaspheme; and being exceed-
" ingly mad against them, I persecuted
" them even unto strange cities."—

Such was St. Paul before his conversion — before his change of sentiment.

"Circumcised," as he says in his Epistle to the Philippians, "the eighth "day — of the stock of Israel — of the "tribe of Benjamin — a Hebrew of the "Hebrews — as touching the law, a "Pharisee — concerning zeal, persecu-"ting the church — touching the righte-"ousness which is in the law, *blame-*"*less.*"

The Pharisees were of the strictest sect of the Jews — the most determined and inveterate enemies to Christ and his doctrine — except that they believed in a future state. But for future happiness they depended upon their own works —

they trusted to the righteousness which was in the law — and which perhaps with many, or most of them, went no farther than their observance of the ceremonial law — in which the heart might be little engaged, and the general conduct but little influenced. In all this, St. Paul was as opposite and inimical to Christianity as possible. Still he acted upon some kind of principle — He verily thought that he ought — that it was his duty, to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But, "He "obtained mercy," as he writes to Timothy, "because he did it *ignorantly, in* "*unbelief.*" (1 Tim. i. 13.)

Let us now see the manner in which he describes his conversion to this same Agrippa. "Whereupon, as I went to

" Damascus, with authority and com-
" mission from the chief priests; at Mid-
" day, O king, I saw in the way a light
" from Heaven, above the brightness of
" the sun, shining round about me, and
" them that journeyed with me. And
" when we were all fallen to the earth,
" I heard a voice, speaking unto me, and
" saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul,
" Saul why persecutest thou me? It is
" hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*
" And I said, who art Thou, Lord?
" And He said, I am Jesus, whom thou
" persecutest. But rise, and stand upon
" thy feet: for I have appeared unto
" thee for this purpose, to make thee a

* Σκληρον σοι προς κεντρα λακτιζειν. It is fruitless to push against thorns; or, to oppose my power and determination.

" minister and a witness, both of these
" things which thou hast seen, and of
" those things in which I will appear unto
" thee: delivering thee from the people,
" and from the Gentiles, unto whom now
" I send thee. To open their eyes, and
" to turn them from darkness to light,
" and from the power of Satan unto God,
" that they may receive forgiveness of
" sins, and inheritance among them who
" are sanctified by faith that is in me.
" Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was
" not disobedient unto the heavenly vi-
" sion; but showed first unto them at Da-
" mascus, and at Jerusalem, and through-
" out all the coasts of Judea, and then
" to the Gentiles, that they should repent,
" and turn to God, and do works meet
" for repentance." (chap. xxvi. 12, &c.)

This is a short, simple narrative, which can hardly be received as a story made up, or invented by the man himself — since there were several people who accompanied him — and who, it might be supposed, would have been ready enough to deny what he said, and to have proved the imposture.

The same may be urged with respect to the doctrine which he immediately promulgated; a short account of which is contained in the few following words. "Having therefore obtained help from "God, I continue unto this day, witness-"ing both to small and great, saying "none other things than those which the "prophets and Moses did say should "come — that Chrirt should suffer, and "that He should be the first that should

" rise from the dead, and show light unto " the people and to the Gentiles." —

These things were well known, and could not be disproved.

There is nothing that savours of falsehood, or of deceit, or of madness, in St. Paul's defence, or in his narration, or in the fourteen Epistles which he has left behind him.

These circumstances attached to our Lord's history, as well as those of the Apostle's conversion, were sufficiently public. It does not appear that Agrippa disbelieved them. " The thing," as St. Paul acutely observes, " was not done " in a corner." And though Festus, the Governor of Judea, chose to call him

mad; whoever will take the pains to make themselves acquainted with his life, and with his writings, will find it a very difficult matter to prove him mad — or to look upon him in any other light than as a man of great learning and eloquence, and of as great sincerity and truth.

It may not be amiss to attend to a few collateral circumstances, and to the testimony which Josephus, the great historian of the Jews, and several other Roman and Greek historians of the most indubitable veracity, bear to the persons mentioned in the history before us. It may be something to be assured that Ananias, and Agrippa, and Felix, and Porcius Festus, and Claudius Lysias, and Cyreneus, actually lived at the time, and filled the posts that are assigned them in the sacred history. It is almost impossible

to go far into matters of this kind upon occasions like the present. But from following up such evidence as this, the truth is to be ascertained, and has been ascertained.

Leaving however for a moment the miraculous part of the Apostle's conversion, though by no means giving it up, how shall we account for his sudden change of sentiment and conduct, but by supposing that God influenced his mind? How shall we account for his consequent zeal and resolution, but by supposing that he was enabled by the same divine influence to bear up against his various persecutions and afflictions? The facts are before up — and I may venture to assert that they never have been disproved — and I am as firmly per-

suaded that they never will be disproved. Till they are, or any part of them, I hold the history and writings of St. Paul, to be one of the most striking testimonies that can be adduced for the truth of the Christian religion.

But his conversion is rendered particularly striking by the miracle which accompanied and effected it. For we are not to exalt it till we look upon it as singularly extraordinary without this. It would be a poor argument in favour of Christianity, to say that it was supported by the conversion of one man. Thousands, in all ages, of as great attainments, perhaps of greater attainments, of as strong prejudices, of as great bigotry to their own opinions, and of as determined incredulity and intolerance as

St. Paul have become converts to the Christian faith; by deep research, and by laborious and patient investigation; which has overcome their scruples, has cleared up their doubts, and convinced them of their error.

Thousands, who have been born, and educated as Christians, have by the same means, and by hearing and reflection; acknowledged a conviction of the truth of that religion which they had derived from their forefathers. All these have borne ample and decided testimony to the Gospel revelation.

An unprejudiced mind, desirous of information, and open to conviction, will not want any new accession of signs or miracles to substantiate the authenticity of the

Holy Scriptures. They carry a witness in themselves, sufficient to challenge the closest and acutest enquiry.

But it is the undisputed miracle that caused the Apostle's conversion—it is the *sudden* conviction that he so strenuously acknowledged—it is the zeal, the labour, the sincerity, and the success, which were displayed in the publication of his new belief—these are the circumstances that have made him so shining and so durable a monument to the doctrines of the great Redeemer—and that have recommended his memory to the particular notice of the Christian Church.

He was indeed, as an eminent writer has observed, "an Apostle in an extraor- "dinary manner, set apart to be a preacher

" of that Gospel which he had persecuted,
" not only to the Jews, but to the heathen
" world."*

Let us learn then from this eminent and indisputable character, the sinfulness and folly of bigotry and incredulity. Let us learn the advantages of an humble teachable temper. Let us learn to confide in the love and mercy of God—not looking for any decided miracle in our favour, nor deceiving ourselves with the notion of an irresistible impulse, to the exclusion of our own endeavours; but striving to maintain a proper exertion of those intellectual faculties with which God has already so miraculously and wonderfully endued us. St. Paul was miraculously chosen, and miraculously

* Nelson's Festivals, &c.

enabled to preach the Gospel. And we, no doubt, are furnished with sufficient powers and means to ascertain the truth of his doctrine, and to conform to its precepts. What it may *not be in our power to effect*, it is a consoling principle of that doctrine, that God will supply. But let us recollect that reason, and conscience, and reflection, and memory, and foresight, have not been given us for nothing. A man is not to sit down with a fanatical pretension to holiness, and carelessly wait for the moment of his conversion, because St. Paul was suddenly converted. But it is the becoming acknowledgment and employment, or the neglect of *these* our spiritual endowments, which, I conceive, will, in a great measure, if not wholly, condemn or acquit us in the sight of God. These are the talents for which we shall have to

account, and which are neither to be hid under a bushel, nor buried in the earth. If properly cultivated and improved, they will produce the fruits of that faith, of that piety and virtue, for which God, through Christ, will reward us. If they are disregarded or perverted, they will rise up in judgment against us, and will become the means of depriving us of his meritorious redemption.

Let us remember that the precepts and example of St. Paul, bespeak an active, and an energetic religion—the doctrine he preached, will be found to excite and to require the whole powers and concurrence of soul and body. The faith he proposes, is the necessity of doing such works as we believe to be our duty, such as we believe will be acceptable to God—such as we

believe He has commanded us to do; and therefore such as we must be persuaded we shall neglect at our peril. This is serving God in spirit and in truth. But let us do what we can, we shall *still* be far from perfect; and therefore we must accept redemption and salvation as a free gift—bestowed according to the will and mercy of God, and not according to our deserts.

St. Paul seems to have prided himself, before his conversion, upon his having been zealous towards God, and *blameless* with regard to the righteousness which is in the law. (Phil. iii. 6.)

But when he was confirmed in the faith of the Gospel, he sees the fallacy of trusting to this righteousness, and writes to the

Corinthians, that he "was determined to "know nothing among them, but Jesus "Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.) He now "counted all things but loss," so that he could but obtain the mercy offered by Christ—and "be found in him, not "having his own righteousness, which is "of the law; but that which is through "the faith of Christ, the righteousness "which is of God, by faith." (Phil. iii. 7, &c.) Looking to the Redeemer as the victim appointed by God for the justification of those who believe in Him.

It was in the defence of this doctrine that he relinquished the comforts of life—that he endured persecution—and under the full persuasion of its truth, submitted to the hands of the public executioner.

The belief and opinions of the first Christians in general might very reasonably be allowed to have great weight with us. But the doctrines—I do not say the opinions—for that is too vague and undeterminate a word—the doctrines of St. Paul, who was so clearly a chosen instrument of God for the diffusion of his will, may well be deemed worthy, of our most serious attention. We cannot read the memorials which he has left us of his faith and conduct, and rank him among the number of such names as filled the calendar before the reformation. His well-attested life alone might be thought to entitle him to our consideration, and might induce us to acknowledge the wisdom of the Church in preserving the memory of a person, who by so extraordinary an ex-

ample of piety and sincerity, has so conspicuously set forth the glory of God, and the truth of a divine revelation.

Let us beware of despising or neglecting such well authenticated testimonies in favour of our holy religion.

And when the objects which now immediately occupy our attention shall be fading from our sight—When, as the king of Israel beautifully expresses it, "the "silver cord of life shall be loosened, "and the spirit shall be about to return "to God that gave it," (Eccles. xii. 6. 7.)—Then, would to God, that every one here present might be able with calmness and assurance to say with St. Paul, "I am "now ready to be offered, and the time of "my departure is at hand—I have fought

" a good fight—I have finished my course.
" I have kept the faith. Henceforth there
" is laid up for me a crown of righteous-
" ness—which the Lord, the righteous
" judge, shall give me at that day. And
" not to me only, but unto all them also
" that love his appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 6, &c.) Let us pray that we may be found of this blessed and happy number. And to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be all praise and thanksgiving now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON XI.

ON RELIGIOUS FAITH.

MATT. ix. 28.

" *Jesus saith unto them, believe ye that*
" *I am able to do this? They said*
" *unto Him, yea, Lord. Then*
" *touched He their eyes, saying,*
" *according to your faith be it unto*
" *you.*"

THE miracles of our Lord were wrought as proofs of his power. That is, of his divine power. And of his power to fulfil

that chief purpose for which He professed He came into the world. Which was, to be the Saviour of mankind. To be the Saviour of mankind, who had fallen from a comparative state of perfection, to that of sin, and folly, and misery.

Most of Christ's miracles were also made to bear allusion to that salvation which he offered to the world. And by healing the diseases of the body, he frequently and expressly designed to manifest, how capable he was to forgive sins, and to save the soul. And even in this manner, salvation was made to appear a matter of faith. A subject intended to exercise our faith and hope.

The miracle to which the words of the text belong, will support this opinion.

"And when Jesus departed thence," that is, from Nazareth, "two blind men fol-
"lowed him, crying, and saying, thou Son
"of David, have mercy on us. And
"when he was come into the house, the
"blind men came to him. And Jesus
"saith unto them, believe ye, that I am
"able to do this? They said unto him,
"yea, Lord. Then touched he their
"eyes; saying, according to your faith be
"it unto you. And their eyes were
"opened."

Apply this to salvation. Feel the pangs of a diseased mind—the torments of an alarmed conscience. Acknowledge the danger of being under "the curse of the "law," (Gal. iii. 13.) that is, open to the consequence of having broken the law. Own too your inability to extricate your-

self from this curse. Lament your sinful state, and the insufficiency of your own endeavours to attain that state of perfection which *must* be yours, before you can know the blessing of salvation. Freely acknowledge your own ignorance, and your own weakness with respect to this point.

And thus, full of contrition and humility, cry, like the blind men, after Jesus, and say, "thou Son of David, have mercy "on me." Save my soul. Help me to recover that everlasting life and happiness which have been forfeited by sin. Such, of a truth, has been the prayer of many a one, when struggling under the dread of a threatening disease, and in the pangs of death.

It would be a very natural, and a very reasonable question to put to a person so praying, "Believest thou that Jesus is "able to do this?" If not—why call upon Him? Because where there is no faith, there can be but little hope, if any.

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, says indeed, "whosoever shall call upon "the name of the Lord, shall be saved." But he adds, "How then shall they call "on him, in whom they have not belie- "ved? And how shall they believe in him, "of whom they have not heard?" (ch. x. 14.) Which latter question shows us the necessity and the wisdom of hearing, and learning, and obtaining an acquaintance with that word of God which is able to save our souls. For thus the Apostle continues to remark, that "faith cometh

" by hearing, and hearing by the word of " God," by the preaching of the word. So that it is not who shall vaguely call—but who shall call with faith—and with faith assisted by knowledge.

A few reflections of this nature would show us how necessary it must be to bestow some thought upon the important subject of salvation; and to be religious upon principle. That we may learn to pray, as the Apostle says, " not with the " mouth only, but with the understanding " also." (1 Cor. xiv. 15.) And that we may " be ready," according to the advice of St. Peter, " always to give an answer " to every man that asketh us, a reason of " the hope that is in us, with meekness " and fear." (1 Pet. iii. 15.) It is to this most desirable point that I would now fix

your attention. And not only recommend it, but, with God's assistance, put you in the way of doing it.

" The good tidings of great joy," which the Gospel of Christ proffers to contain, is too often considered as a circumstance of which there is no need to think, till all other subjects of thought are vanishing from before us, and when the cloud of death is overshadowing us. But this is a fatal mistake. Equally injurious to our own happiness, and to the nature of our Christian profession.

The blessings of salvation, according to the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, are attached to this life, as well as to the next. A state of grace and mercy is open to us here. And it is by " the excellency

" of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our " Lord; by knowing Him, and the power " of his resurrection, and the fellowship of " his sufferings," (Phil. iii. 8, 10.)—that we are to make ourselves capable of going through this world with peace, and comfort, and content. That we may be able to call upon Him on all occasions, and to depend upon his promises under all circumstances. It is by this means that we are to maintain our Christian " warfare," and to arm ourselves with that " shield of " faith, whereby we may be able to with- " stand all the fiery darts of the wicked." (Eph. vi. 16.) And to surmount all the disappointments, and afflictions, and untoward accidents, to which our earthly pilgrimage is unavoidably subject.

In short, in every situation, as often as

we feel disposed to acknowledge the supremacy and direction of our Almighty Father, and to look up to Him for favour and protection, either with respect to this life, or to that which is to come; the language of the text will mark the degree of confidence we may venture to indulge. "According to your faith be it unto you," will be a full answer to all our petitions. "Ask in faith, nothing wavering," (James i. 6.) is the rule of Scripture by which we are to govern ourselves. The question is, how we may learn to acquire this faith. This is our present consideration.

Jesus is called "the Author and Finisher of our faith." (Heb. xii. 2.) Through Him are all the promises of God to be fulfilled. How then was faith in Him first established? I answer, by the strength,

and by the sure word of prophecy. The Divine Author of our faith did not content himself with saying, "I am he"— but in goodness and mercy He condescended to furnish man with the means of judging, in great measure, for himself. And He said to the unbelieving Jews, "search the "Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have "eternal life; and these are they which "testify of me." (John, v. 39.)

To the same testimony did the first and greatest teachers of Christianity appeal. And such was the argument by which they endeavoured to fix their hearers in the faith of Christ crucified. I shall only mention one instance, which you will find in the 28th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

When St. Paul was at Rome, a prisoner at large, "being suffered to dwell by him-" self, with a soldier that kept him;" he confesses to the Jews, to use his own words, "that for the *hope of Israel* I am bound with this chain." And upon their desiring to hear what he had further to say concerning the new religion which he taught; "when they appointed him a day, "there came many to him into his lodg-" ing: to whom he expounded and testifi-" ed the kingdom of God, persuading "them concerning Jesus, both *out of the* "*law of Moses, and out of the prophets,* "from morning till evening." (v. 23.)

Under the persuasion and influence of this same testimony did the two blind men, mentioned in the text, call upon Jesus to heal them of their bodily infirmity.

They address him as the "Son of David." No doubt they had heard the history and character of Christ, together with the fame of his miracles. As Jews they surely were acquainted with their own law, and they knew that their own prophets had foretold that an extraordinary person, answering, as they would find, the description of Christ, should "be born of "the seed of David, and in the town of "city of Bethlehem, where David was." (John, vii. 42.) They had heard the remarkable words of their prophet Micah, which aroused the jealousy of Herod, and led him to commit the horrid massacre of the children that are justly called the holy Innocents. "But thou, Bethlehem Eph-"ratah," says the prophecy, "though thou "be little among the thousands of Judah, "yet out of thee shall He come forth unto

" me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose " goings forth have been from of old, from " everlasting." (Micah, v. 2.) It was the dread of this prophecy, I say, that tempted Herod to the shocking crime alluded to, as soon as he was told by the chief priests and scribes, that it was predicted of Christ that He should be born in Bethlehem of Judea. (Matt. ii. 4, &c.).

It must be supposed that the supplicants to our Lord had also heard the prophecy of the great Isaiah, which you will find in the 11th chapter. " And there " shall come forth a rod out of the stem " of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out " of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord " shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom " and understanding, the spirit of counsel " and might, the spirit of knowledge and

" of the fear of the Lord: and shall make
" him of quick understanding in the fear
" of the Lord: and he shall not judge
" after the sight of his eyes, neither re-
" prove after the hearing of his ears; but
" with righteousness shall he judge the
" poor, and reprove with equity, for the
" meek of the earth: and He shall smite
" the earth with the rod of his mouth, and
" with the breath of his lips shall He slay
" the wicked."

It was well known, and acknowledged by all the Jews, that "to Abraham and " his seed were the promises of a mighty " deliverer made—In thy seed," said the angel of God to Abraham, "shall all " the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. xxii. 18.)

Impressed with this sense of what Moses and the prophets had written concerning Jesus, the blind men cry after Him in the words of the text, "Thou Son "of David, have mercy on us." And there can be little doubt that on these several accounts it was, that is, for the sake of substantiating these several prophecies, that the Evangelists have taken care to preserve the genealogy, the lineal descent of Christ from David, and from Abraham. As you will find in the first chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, and the third of St. Luke's.

This is one way then, that I would endeavour to lead you, in one sense, to the knowledge of Christ. A knowledge as far surpassing all other wisdom, and all other knowledge, as the glory of the Hea-

vens does that of the earth. "Search the "Scriptures."

And I earnestly recommend it again, as a subject to be remembered by you, when I shall no longer be the humble means of instructing you.* Separated, as you probably will be, consider the advantages that may still attend you Wherever you are, you still will always have places of worship to resort to, and ministers to apply to, who will not only think it their duty, but their crown and their glory to give you every assistance in their power.

In addition to this, or in failure of it, you will probably always have your Bibles

* This was the last address on board a man of war at the conclusion of the temporary peace in the year 1802.

to resort to—the written word of God. A word, emphatically so called, established, as I have already observed, by prophecy, by the length of time, by the corroboration of history, and by the irrefutable investigations of the wisest and best men that the world has produced in all ages. It is here that you must learn to put your faith in Jesus. It is here you must learn that "unto you was born in "the city of David, a Saviour, which is "Christ, the Lord." (Luke, ii. 11.) It is here you must learn that the blessings of salvation are to begin in this world. And that you have "a God at hand, as well as "afar off." (Jer. xxiii. 23.) A god, who will assist your infirmities, and strengthen you with his holy spirit.

If then, with an abhorrence of our sins

and a consciousness of our whole dependence upon our Almighty Redeemer, we lift up our hands to the throne of grace, and say, "Thou Son of David, have "mercy on us," we need not doubt, upon the truth of the Gospel, that "according "to our faith, it will be done unto us." He that was able to cure the blindness of the eyes with a touch, will also be able to cure the blindness of our understanding, and to give us the full knowledge of Himself, and of his saving power. He will stand by us in all dangers, He will lessen the burden of all afflictions, and will blunt the arrows of temptation, He will avert the sting of death, He will lead us to a victory over the grave, and throw open to us the gates of everlasting life.

In conclusion, have you ever seriously

thought of the great importance of this doctrine? Have you ever, in any of those trials that are inseparable from the present life—have you ever in the hour of affliction, or upon the bed of sickness, been able to comfort yourselves by a firm reliance upon what the prophet Isaiah calls "the sure mercies of David?" (ch. lv. 3.) That is, with a well-grounded expectation of becoming partakers of those mercies which are promised through Christ, emphatically called the Son of David? Have you ever, in the moment of temptation, found yourselves able, or inclined, to conquer the evil dispositions of your minds, from a love of God, and for the sake of those promises of eternal happiness, which are to be traced through the Scriptures to their completion in this Son of David? In short, I need only ask, have you ever en-

deavoured to impress your minds with the truth of the religion you profess?

Can you look forward with any thing like a reasonable hope of pardon and salvation through the merits of that Almighty Redeemer, whose servants you call yourselves, and whose name you bear? Are you persuaded that God has accepted the death of Christ as an atonement for your sins?

If you cannot, in some measure, satisfy your own minds on this point—or if you are not able to give something like a rational answer to such questions, it may be feared that you have not given the subject the attention and application it deserves. And the blindness, the darkness of your understanding is much more deplorable

than the bare loss of sight. In this case we should all have great need to cry after this Son of David to have mercy upon us, and to pour the light of his saving grace into our hearts. He alone indeed can give us light. The spirit of God, we are told, will lead us into all truth—but we must remember that this light and truth will be afforded us according to our degree of faith. It is a folly to talk of having no faith. It is a subject too serious to be treated with listlessness or with contempt —for if we have no faith, we can have no hope. But we may be assured that our hopes will rise, in proportion as our faith is confirmed. This is a natural consequence. And by the goodness of God, mercy embraceth us on every side.

The covenant which God made with the

world, " even the sure mercies of David," the prophet declares to be an everlasting covenant. A covenant never to be broken, but by our obstinacy and wilful sinfulness. " Be not afraid," as Christ said when He raised the ruler's daughter, " Be not " afraid, only *believe*." (Mark, v. 36.)

But you want grounds for your faith. Revolve therefore in your minds the subject that has now detained you. Consider the promises which were made to Abraham, and to David, and consider how clearly those promises were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. This is the use we are to make of the word of God. We are not to hear it or to read it as a thing of course, or as a matter in which we are not deeply concerned. But we are to trace the plan of redemption which was foretold

in the old testament, and from the subsequent writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, who have recorded the life and the doctrines of Christ, we are to learn in what manner that plan of redemption was carried on and accomplished in Him.

And let us not doubt that the grace of God will be assisting to these our endeavours. That if we draw near to Him, He will come nigh to us. And that He will give us such conceptions of his power and mercy, as shall yield us peace, and satisfaction, and contentment in this life, and lead us to the enjoyment of everlasting happiness in the life to come. That this may be our inheritance, God Almighty grant, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

And to Him, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for ever.

SERMON XII.

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

LUKE, x. 41, 42.

" *And Jesus answered and said unto*
" *her, Martha, Martha, thou art*
" *careful and troubled about many*
" *things; but one thing is needful.*
" *And Mary hath chosen that good*
" *part, which shall not be taken*
" *away from her.*"

IF by religion we mean the worship and service of God, religion is stampt

upon the heart of all men; unless upon the heart of an Atheist, if such a being is to be found.

An atheist is a person who denies the existence of God. He must account for the creation of the world as he can — and to talk of religion to him would be a waste of time.

The infidel goes not so far as this. He acknowledges a God, the maker of the universe — but he doubts the truth of Revelation, and thinks he has a right to make a religion of his own. It may be conceived that he would form one agreeable to his own wishes. That he would discard from his belief every thing that he disliked, and admit only such

notions as were conformable to his natural propensities.

It is to be feared that there are such persons in the world — and what is worse, in the Christian world. But if the world at large had been left in such a state, we may imagine the miseries and dangers that would have existed, from the differences of opinion — from the ignorance of some — from the bigotry and enthusiasm of others — and from the vitiated inclinations of most: not to say, of all. This shows us the necessity and the use, and therefore the wisdom, the mercy, and the truth, of a divine revelation.

The God that made us has given us a religion, surrounded with every infallible mark of its inspired origin. By this

religion we are to be guided both as to matters of faith and practice. According to the doctrines of this religion we are to be judged. Christ Jesus, "came a "light into the world, that whosoever "believeth in Him, should not abide in "darkness." (John, xii. 46.) The great object of Christ's religion is to fit us for a future state. "He hath brought life "and immortality to light through the "Gospel." (2 Tim. i. 10.) It is this which, by comparison, puts all worldly considerations far beneath us, and which makes the care of the soul the first and chief duty of man. The care of the soul is the one thing needful, and I may say, the only thing needful. For if the soul be safe, the man will be safe, even to the blessings and to the enjoyment of this life. But if the soul be in danger—

its safety be doubtful, there can be no peace, no satisfaction nor hope, neither with respect to this world, nor to that which is to come.

The mention I have made of atheism and infidelity was merely to make you understand, that no persuasion, no belief, that is not in conformity to the revealed will of God, will *insure* us happiness.

The atheist, as I have already observed, must be totally out of the question. There can be no arguing with a man who has thrown off all dependence upon God. Some may for a while have pretended to do this — and if such a creature, under the form of a human being can exist; it is easy to guess what sort of a member of society he must be. His

only hope and expectation must be that of annihilation. Of sinking into the earth, and of perishing for ever like a brute. Of what virtue? Of what honour or honesty can such a Being be thought capable? He has no principle of fear to deter him from any wickedness he may be tempted to commit. He has no motive of love or gratitude to incline him to the practice of any virtue. The care of the soul comes not into his consideration. It might almost be thought that such a person were unendowed with reason. It is therefore almost impossible to imagine such a character.

The infidel is something better, but still full of error. The man who only believes what he likes, who rejects from his creed whatever appears to be above his imme-

diate comprehension, or whatever is repugnant to his disposition and wishes, cannot have any very solid grounds for his actions. He looks forward, it is true, to a future state of existence. But he marks out a path to heaven of his own forming — and depends upon the suggestions of his own deceitful heart, and upon the inconsistencies of his own fallible nature. The care of the soul, with him, is an easy if not an indifferent matter — and he thinks to claim eternal glory upon the strength of his own imperfect obedience. He rests his pretensions to happiness, both present and future, upon worldly means — and upon these variable fallacious objects, his thoughts and his efforts are chiefly if not wholly employed. Like Martha, he is "careful and troubled "about many things; but one thing is

" needful." The means which God, in his wisdom and mercy, has prescribed for his happiness and for his salvation, are made at the best a secondary concern, if attention is paid to them at all. There is no great inducement to place extensive confidence in persons of this description.* And yet, I repeat, it is to be feared there are many to be found, even among professed Christians; who carry their incredulity to a great degree of infidelity. But it is among the inconsiderate and the lukewarm, who are either unacquainted with their own nature, or regardless of it; and who have not learned to make a proper estimate between spiritual and corporeal

* The heathen poet has well put together the incredulous and the deceitful — Επει οι παιδες υπερφιαλοι και απιστοι. HOMER Il.

things, or between things temporal and eternal. It is this necessary and most important distinction which seems to be pointed at in the text.

The Evangelist relates, that "Jesus "entered into a certain village, and a "certain woman, named Martha, re- "ceived Him into her house. And she "had a sister, called Mary, who also sat "at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But "Martha was cumbered about much ser- "ving, and came to Him, and said, "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sis- "ter hath left me to serve alone? Bid "her therefore that she help me. And "Jesus answered and said unto her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and "troubled about many things: But one "thing is needful. And Mary hath

" chosen that good part which shall
" not be taken away from her."

It is not difficult to deduce the lesson which this short history is calculated to convey. We have only to mark the behaviour of the two sisters, and the construction which Jesus put upon it. The kind and mild rebuke He passed upon one, and the important decided approbation which He expressed towards the other.

If they did not already believe and acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of mankind, they no doubt knew that He was a great Prophet, a Teacher of righteousness, and one that professedly pointed out the way to heaven, and to a blessed immortality.

They were both well inclined, though there appears a difference in their natural dispositions. It was a mark of urbanity and kindness in Martha, who it may be concluded was the elder, to receive Him, and perhaps to invite Him into their house. The same good temper made her desirous of convincing Him that He was a welcome guest, by every attention in her power. But in doing this, she seems to have lost sight of his exalted character. And more intent than was necessary upon her household worldly concerns, she gives up the advantages of his conversation and instruction.

Mary, on the other hand, thought these of the first and greatest consequence. She accepted his visit as an opportunity of improvement not to be missed. And

eager to catch every syllable that fell from his lips, in a posture of reverence and attention, "She sat at Jesus' feet, and "heard his word."

Which appears the wiser, or the more commendable of the two?—Who could bestow their whole time, and all their thoughts, upon the trifling concerns of this perishable life, while Jesus was preaching the glad tidings of salvation contained in the Gospel, and unfolding the kingdom of heaven?

Martha's chief care was in providing for the body that soon must moulder into dust and ashes. Mary's desire was to enrich the mind, and to secure the welfare of the eternal soul. The food that Martha was so assiduously engaged in pre-

paring, would itself soon be consumed, and at the best would only contribute to a momentary existence. The food that Mary sought, would sustain her for ever. "It is written, man shall not live by "bread alone; but by every word that "proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. iv. 4.)

If, as was most probably the case, Martha and Mary were the sisters of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, as it is recorded in the 11th chapter of St. John —and where, it must be owned, that Martha appears in a more favourable light—it was a family with whom Jesus frequently associated, and on whom his regard and friendship was graciously bestowed. "Now Jesus," says St. John, "loved Martha, and her sister, and La-

" zarus." (chap. xi. 5.) They therefore must have known Him — they must already have been acquainted with his doctrine, and have acceded to the great import of it. This makes Martha's worldly solicitude, or I shall rather say her spiritual indifference, upon the present occasion, the more extraordinary; and shows that Mary's mind and affection was more " set on things above, than on things on " the earth." (Col. iii. 2.)

However, our Lord does not reprove Martha with severity, as if he meant to insinuate that the concerns of this world, and the things of this life, were to be despised and wholly relinquished; for this is a notion only to be found in the heads of fanatics and enthusiasts, who do not always feel themselves enabled or

inclined to pursue the steps which they rigidly affect to mark out for others. It was an *over-care*, an *over-solicitude* and anxiety about the things of this life which Jesus kindly reproved; while at the same time He showed the preference that was justly due to things of infinitely greater interest and value.

What is the body, when compared with the soul? What are the few moments, or I will say the numbered years, that may be allotted us here on earth, when compared with that eternal state which we have before us? To what will the highest gratifications, or the most splendid acquisitions amount, when the grave is preparing to receive us? What will calm and tranquillize the parting hour, when our eyes are to be closed one mo-

ment upon the transitory scenes of this life, and opened the next upon the unbounded realms of eternity?

This is not the rant of fanaticism, or of a heated mis-guided imagination; but the result of deliberate and sober reflections. Of reflections for which the mind of man is amply fitted, and towards which every thought, every remembrance of his own nature and condition strongly invite him.

Thus then it becomes the wisdom and the duty of every man to make his choice. In the first place, whether he will prefer, I will say, the amplitude, the fulness of enjoyment that is to be met with on earth — an enjoyment, it must not be forgotten, unavoidably liable to many interruptions,

uncertain, and at the utmost extent but of short duration — or whether he will prefer an inheritance in the kingdom of Heaven, incorruptible, invariable, and everlasting. And having decided as, it will be imagined, every rational being *must* decide; it will become him, in the next place, to determine upon those means which are most likely to insure his success.

An enquiry of this nature need not take up much time, because it might only be necessary to observe, that if any power can be supposed to reside in man, equal to the task of insuring his salvation, *that* power *must* be complete and perfect — it must not be defective in any way. It must be equivalent to every notion we can form of God's justice, as well as of his

mercy. And where is the man who can presume to say that he possesses such a power. It is enough to reply to such a question, that man is an imperfect creature. It would be enough to bring before you the inconsistences and the deficiences that have abounded in every system of religion, every system of piety or of morality that has ever been planned or framed according to the judgment of man.

Take one instance of the philosopher (Epicurus) who advised his disciples to select a good man, and imagine him always before them; and so to live and to act that he might approve them. But how much more reasonable and elevated is the Psalmist's idea, when he tells us that "He had set *God* always before him?" (Ps. xvi. 8.) What influence can a

frail fellow-mortal be supposed to have, if God, our Creator, have none? "Who "art thou," says the prophet, "that thou "shouldest be afraid of a man that shall "die, and of the son of man who shall "be as the grass? And forgettest the "Lord thy Maker, who hath stretched "forth the Heavens, and laid the founda-"tion of the earth? (Isa. li. 12, 13.)

It is true indeed that many sins would be avoided, if the sinner always imagined that his actions were witnessed.* And if it should be thought useful or necessary to imagine the presence of any one whom we might fear, and whose authority might make even privacy sacred and decorous; why not remember that we

* Magna pars peccatorum tollitur, si peccaturis Testis adsistat. SEN.

are always in the presence of God? "The "eyes of the Lord are in every place, "beholding the evil and the good." (Prov. xv. 3.)

If faith and obedience are to make a part of any religion, of which eternal salvation is to be the result, and that they *must* make a part of it cannot be denied—*that* faith must be directed towards proper objects, and *that* obedience *must* be perfect. And where has ever been the man capable of effecting either? Who will be bold enough to rest his pretensions to eternal happiness upon the strength of his own merits, or upon any mode of faith which he may choose to adopt according to his own conceptions?

Certain it is, that man is furnished with

great and wonderful endowments. But these endowments are often so mistaken and perverted, and so overshadowed by the stains of guilt, and depravity, and error, that means above the reach of any he can produce, must be sought for the recovery of lost happiness. God, no doubt, saw this necessity, and mercifully provided a sufficient antidote against the effect of those evils, which, for reasons inscrutable by us, his power has not interposed to prevent. To this He added his revealed will for the government of mankind, and as their guide in matters of faith and practice. It is impossible to avoid a recurrence to this, as often as we consider our own present condition, and our future expectations. Revelation is wholly consistent and reconcilable with the attributes of the Deity

Let us come then to the conclusion of what may have been imperfectly stated, but stated from conviction.

As the soul of man is immortal, and his body perishable, the soul ought, in reason and in truth, to be made his principal concern. And as the things of this world will have an end, and all we can say of eternity is that it is endless, no comparison can be made between the consideration that is due to one and the other. "Seeing," as St. Peter says, speaking of the heavens and the earth as we behold them, "seeing "that all these things shall be dissolved, "what manner of persons ought ye to be, "in all holy conversation and godliness. (2 Pet. iii. 11.)

It is not that the body is to be neglected,

or that the world is to be despised. They are both the work of God, and on that account they both deserve to be made the objects of our care no less than of our admiration. But it is the *comparative* interest and value that we have, either in things temporal or eternal, that claims the greatest attention. The world is full of the glory of God. But that glory is not to be compared, as far as our expectations are warranted by Scripture, with the glory of which we are made capable in a world to come. It is with a reference to this, and to this only, that all the concerns of the present life are said to be trifling, vain, and impotent. All the care, all the solicitude and anxiety we can bestow upon them will avail us nothing, when we are called upon to leave them.

Nevertheless, there *is* a care and a solicitude, a spirit of industry and of emulation, a fondness and an attachment belonging to our present state, interwoven in our very nature, and which it would be criminal to disregard or to contemn. But the prospect of futurity will teach us to moderate these sensations, and to keep them within due bounds. The eternal welfare of the soul may justly claim the fervour of our zeal, and the warmth and steadiness of our affections. This is the grand object with which nothing can be brought in competition. "For what," said Christ, "is a man profited, if he shall "gain the whole world, and lose his own "soul? Or what shall a man give in ex"change for his soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.)

It remains then in the last place to en-

quire by what means the eternal welfare of the soul is to be insured. And this, I humbly think, may be determined in few words. It need only be repeated, that no device of man alone can be sufficient for this purpose. And for this plain reason, that man cannot devise nor conceive any thing with respect to God (except his perfect and incomprehensible nature) that shall be wholly and decidedly free from error. In this sense we may literally admit the Apostle's remark, that "the wis-"dom of this world is foolishness with "God." (1 Cor. iii. 19.) Where then shall we turn but to those Holy Scriptures "which are able to make us wise unto "salvation through faith which is in "Christ Jesus?" "All Scripture," adds the same Apostle, "is given by inspira-"tion of God, and is profitable for doc-

" trine, for reproof, for correction, for in-
" struction in righteousness; that the man
" of God may be perfect, thoroughly fur-
" nished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.) The word of God, in this case, is not to be combated. Let us not receive it carelessly or partially, nor carelessly reject it. Let us "read, mark, " learn, and inwardly digest it," before we venture to select what we like, or to decide upon what we may fancy to be unimportant or unnecessary. " Every word " of God is pure." (Prov. xxx. 5.) Let us beware that we "add not to it, nor " diminish from it." (Deut. xii. 32.) If we have no faith in it, all argument must be given up. But if we have that faith which I trust we have, and which it is the work of reason, in great measure, to substantiate; let us make the word of God

the standard of our belief. Let us accept it as the light of our paths, and trust to it as the source of our hopes. And when Christ by his Gospel vouchsafes to speak to us, let us keep the end of his doctrine in view. Let us not, with Martha, be occupied in things of little consequence, but, God grant, that with Mary we may choose that good part, which shall not be taken away from us.

And now to our Almighty Creator, Sanctifier, and Redeemer, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

THE DANGER OF RELAPSING INTO SIN.

JOHN, v. 14.

"*Behold, thou art made whole; sin*
"*no more, lest a worse thing come*
"*unto thee.*"

THE chapter from which these words are taken, informs us, that at Jerusalem there was a pool, or pond, the water of which, at certain periods, had the property of curing diseases. That Jesus found a

man, who had had an infirmity, that is a disease, thirty and eight years, sitting or lying by this pool, waiting for the accustomed season to receive the benefit of the water; but could find no person kind or charitable enough to help him in. And being a cripple, he could not avail himself of the opportunity. Jesus heard his story —took compassion upon him—and miraculously healed him by a word. "Rise," said He, "take up thy bed and walk." Our Lord afterward found the man in the temple—and then He gave him the warning and admonition in the text, "Behold, "thou art made whole; sin no more, lest "a worse thing come unto thee." From this short history, the following observations may be made. First, that Christ's character and power were established by miracles—that He frequently performed

them for this purpose—and cured the body, to prove that He was equally able to cure and save the soul. He put an end to inveterate diseases, to show that He could conquer desperate sins. And cleansed various persons of their infirmities, as a proof that He could pardon their offences. Secondly we may learn, that it is the nature of sin to produce misery—that immediate and temporal calamities are very often, nay most commonly the consequences of it. And thirdly, that if men are not to be reclaimed by this means, something worse than temporal calamity may be dreaded.

As to the first of these observations, namely, that Christ intended to establish his character and power as the Messiah, the Saviour, by miracles, must be so clear

to any one who is at all acquainted with the New Testament, that many words cannot be necessary to prove it. His own answer to the messengers that were sent to Him from John the Baptist, is sufficient for this purpose. They ask Him, "art "thou He that should come, or do we "look for another? Go and show John "again," said Christ, "such things as ye "do hear and see. The blind receive "their sight, and the lame walk—the "lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear: "The dead are raised up, and the poor "have the Gospel preached to them." (Matt. xi. 3, &c.) And again in this chapter on which we are discoursing, speaking to the Jews of John the Baptist, He remarks, "He was a burning and a "shining light, and ye were willing for a "season to rejoice in his light. But I

" have greater witness than that of John " —for the works which the Father hath " given me to finish," and certainly his miracles were among these works—" the " same works that I do bear witness of " me, that the Father hath sent me." (v. 35, 36.) That He professedly relieved men from their bodily infirmities, to prove that He had the power of forgiving sins, we learn in the 9th chapter of St. Matthew. Where we read, that they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy— " And Jesus, seeing their faith," which shows us also how necessary faith is towards obtaining any blessings—" Jesus, " seeing their faith, saith unto the sick of " the palsy, son, be of good cheer, thy " sins are forgiven thee." The Scribes, in their hearts, but not openly, accused Him of blasphemy for this—" And Jesus

"knowing their thoughts," by which circumstance He manifested his divine nature—"said, wherefore think ye evil in "your hearts?" "For whether is easier "to say, thy sins be forgiven thee, or to "say, arise, and walk?" Surely He here designs to intimate, that they were both equally easy to Omnipotence—both equally easy to Him by whom, as St. John says, "all things were made." (John, i. 3.) For He adds, "But that ye may know "that the Son of man hath power on "earth to forgive sins, arise," said He to the sick man, "take up thy bed, and go "unto thine house." (Matt. ix. 2, &c.) Thus have we seen that Christ's character and power, as the Saviour of the world, were designedly to be established by miracles—by his doing works, as He said,

" which none other man did." (John, xv. 24.)

In the second place we may learn from the history of the text, that it is the nature of sin to produce misery. It often does so by the most natural consequences,—And often as the direct tokens of God's judgments. That both were the case in the instance of the man before us, is not improbable, by the words which Christ addressed to him—" sin no more, lest a " worse thing come unto thee," which seems at least to intimate, that what had already befallen him was the immediate consequence of his sin. The vengeance of God might also be implied—since He either orders or permits all things. And through every part of the sacred writings, both of the Old and New Testament, he

has sufficiently shown his determination to punish sin. But take it in the most direct way—and a little observation might convince us, that there is scarcely a sin we *can* commit, which does not either bring its punishment along with it, or that is not, sooner or later, followed by punishment, even in this world. And no doubt it is mercifully designed to be so. Since many may be deterred, who cannot be persuaded—and fear may operate with those who will not listen to advice. Happy is it when by any means a soul is saved.

For the truth of what I have advanced, I need only appeal to the testimony and conviction in every one's breast. But if you wish for any thing like a proof—look at the calamities and the diseases which

every day will put before you as the consequences of intemperance, or vice of any kind. The pains, distress, and torment of the glutton or the drunkard, or which they bring upon themselves who in any way transgress against the laws of religion and virtue. To which you must add the agony and affliction of mind occasioned by the loss of integrity, of character and reputation — the disgrace and infamy which from many vices is hardly ever to be done away—and the insults, the ill-treatment, and inhumanity which the world is too ready to pour down upon the crimes and errors of each other.

To be more minute, ask the liar, as long as he has a spark of religion or of goodness remaining, what uneasiness and vexation he feels, by perceiving that he is detested

and hated by every one—And that he is for ever doubted and suspected even though he may be conscious that he speaks the truth. If we look to the greater evils that disturb the world, we may ask with the Apostle St. James, "From whence come wars and fightings "among you? Come they not hence, even "of your lusts that war in your mem- "bers?" (James, iv. 1.) Yes—it is the vices of ambition and envy, the inordinate lust of power, and of riches, that lifts the sword of nation against nation, of man against man, and that carries misery and desolation in its train. But we are rather at present to confine ourselves to the more personal and private vices that destroy our peace. And scarcely, I repeat, is there a sin that we commit, which, if it is persisted in, does not effectually do this.

The man whom our Lord found at the pool of Bethesda, was afflicted with an incurable malady, which he had endured for thirty and eight years—many, and as cruel are the disorders and uneasinesses continually produced by sin—and strange, as it must appear, that though his sufferings and his misfortune were so great, not one could be found to take pity upon him and help him to his cure. Yet such are the consequences of sin, and such, alas! is too much the way of the world. One should think that examples of this kind, and which are really not unfrequent, with the addition perhaps of our own experience, would be sufficient to show us the odious and dreadful nature of sin, and to alarm our fears respecting it. And if the sufferings of others, or our own, have this effect, and prevent us from committing it

—or if they have the power to stop our progress when we have entered upon it, and call us back to the paths of virtue and holiness, we shall have abundant cause to acknowledge the mercy and wisdom of God, and to be thankful for whatever we may be made to endure. "It is good for "me that I have been in trouble," said the pious Psalmist, "that I may learn thy "statutes. Before I was troubled, I went "wrong; but now have I kept thy word." (Psal. cxix.)

But in the third place, if nothing will have the effect of recalling us to our duty, if we can neither be persuaded to love nor to fear God—if admonition and experience are all thrown away upon us—In short, if unhappily we cannot prevail upon ourselves to think seriously of our salva-

tion, but in spite of every thing continue in habits that we know must end in the loss of it—we may then reasonably expect some greater evil than any that has yet overtaken us. "Sin no more, lest a "worse thing come unto thee."

And what can be worse than temporal calamities,—what can be worse than the sufferings of this life, which shall continue for years without mitigation, and which the grave cannot end, unless it be to exchange them for those that are eternal? And this is what the word of God assures us must be the fate of incorrigible offenders—of such as obstinately turn a deaf ear to all the remonstrances of reason and conscience. God grant that there be none of this description here—if there be, let them consider this as the day of their

visitation, in which these suggestions are humbly laid before them. Let them that forget God lay it to heart, lest "He pluck "them away, and there be none to deliver "them." (Psalm, l. 22.) To conclude with a few general remarks upon the subject, we may learn in the first place to rely with the utmost confidence upon the truth of the Christian religion, since He who taught it, has left so many undeniable and infallible proofs of his own awful and wonderful character. It is worthy of remark, that He who came to call us to repentance, is Himself to be our judge: and that while He condemns all manner of sin and wickedness, He still proposes Himself as our Saviour. He has said enough indeed to convince us of the dreadful and unhappy nature and consequences of sin, and of the detestation with which

He beholds it. But He has also said enough to show us, that his pardoning love and mercy are unlimited, and that nothing but our own obstinacy, perverseness, and folly, can deprive us of them. No sinner ever applied to Him in vain—no signs of contrition and amendment were ever overlooked by Him,—no distress escaped his notice and compassion.—And though He said in general terms, that they who at the day of judgment shall be found to have persisted in doing evil without repentance, should go into everlasting punishment, yet the words of the text are perhaps as harsh as any He ever used to any individual. "Sin no more, lest a "worse thing come unto thee."

Secondly, we may learn, that the sinner who now resolves to quit his evil ways,

and turns to Christ with humility, faith, and repentance, will be cleansed from his offences. To the man of whom we have been particularly speaking, He says, "Behold, thou art made whole—sin no "more." To a woman who had led a profligate and abandoned life, and who was invidiously and malevolently brought before Him, He says, perhaps upon seeing her countenance full of shame and remorse, "Woman, where are those thine "accusers? Hath no man condemned "thee? Neither do I condemn thee; go, "and sin no more." (John, viii. 10, &c.) From which it may be inferred, that though He neither condemned, nor acquitted her, because He would not interfere with the common course of justice according to human laws—yet that He meant to assure her, that she might escape from the

farther wrath of heaven, if she abstained from her sins in future. To another, who it must be observed, showed the most evident signs of humility and sorrow, his words are, "thy sins are forgiven. Thy "faith hath saved thee—go in peace." (Luke, vii. 48, &c.) What stronger motives or persuasions can we have, to leave our sinful habits, and to turn to a master who has shown himself so kind, so lenient, and so merciful, as Christ has in every part of his deportment? And who in few words, and they are his own words, has left us this absolute and memorable promise, that "him that cometh to me, I will "in no wise cast out." (John, vi. 37.)

If the temptation to sin appear great and strong? we may perhaps fancy it more so than it is—but of one thing we

may be certain—that the longer we yield to it, the greater and stronger it will become: till the heart will be hardened and dead to all sense of God and of goodness —and then the work of sin will be complete, and the soul will be lost. "When "sin is finished, it bringeth forth death." (James, i. 15.)

If repentance, and amendment, which is the only sure sign of repentance, appear difficult, Christ surely has taken away a great part of the difficulty, by the disposition and readiness He has shown upon numberless occasions, to accept and assist, I might almost say, the slightest advances towards it. But the longer repentance and amendment are delayed, it is certain that the more difficult they will become. And the same Lord, whose

mercy is so visible, has nevertheless warned us, in the 13th chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, that a time may come, when the door of mercy and acceptance will be shut. And if this should not happen in this life—yet, if sudden death, from which no living creature can be secure, should overtake us before repentance and amendment is begun—we shall then have nothing but the dreadful expectation of its being shut against us.

If they who have been betrayed into the way of sin, should be led to think that do what they will, they never can appear holy again before God—And if so unfortunate and ill-grounded a supposition should lead them to be careless and indifferent about what they do—Let them only call to mind the instances I have mention-

ed of Christ's promises and declarations to the contrary—"Behold, thou art made "whole,"—"thy sins are forgiven thee—"thy faith hath saved thee," which was surely as much as to say, be comforted—thou art again in the favour and protection of God, and in the road to salvation: only take care not to abuse this mercy by wantonly quitting it again.

Let them remember the pathetic parable of the prodigal son—who when he had passed his days in profligacy, and "had "wasted his substance with riotous living," when he was in the greatest distress, and the world had no pity for him, starving with hunger, "and no man gave unto "him." He no sooner came to himself, and formed the resolution of returning to his father with penitence and prayer—

than he was met more than half way, with the utmost tenderness and affection; and received as one that had been dead and was alive again, that had been lost and was found.

Christ assuredly meant to instruct us by this parable, that God will act by us in the same gracious manner—I will say, to the vilest of those who resolve to return to Him. And lest the censure and condemnation of the world should tempt any weak minds to despair, and to give themselves up for lost; let them, if they are sincere in their wish and resolution to amend, apply to themselves the reasoning of St. Paul. "Who shall lay anything to "the charge of God's elect?" It is God "that justifieth; who is he that condemn-"eth? It is Christ died—yea rather that

" is risen again, who is even at the right
" hand of God, who also maketh interces-"
" sion for us. Who shall separate us
" from the love of Christ? shall tribula-
" tion? or distress? or persecution? or
" famine? or nakedness? or peril? or
" the sword?" (Rom. viii. 33.)—No—whatever be our situation, however low and abject we may be in the opinion of others, or of ourselves—We are taught to believe that He will have compassion upon us, if we turn to Him with sincerity and truth, and endeavour to obey Him for the time to come. May God enable us all to do so—that we may feel the comfort of a restored conscience, and enjoy the hopes of peace and happiness now and for ever.

SERMON XIV.

THE WILD OLIVE TREE.

ROMANS, xi. 19, &c.

" *Thou wilt say then, the branches*
" *were broken off, that I might be*
" *grafted in.*

" *Well — because of unbelief they*
" *were broken off, and thou stand-*
" *est by faith. Be not high-mind-*
" *ed, but fear.*

" *For if God spared not the natural*

" *branches, take heed, lest he also*
" *spare not thee.*"

I WOULD wish to induce you, by any means, to think seriously of religion. I do not mean that religion should have the effect of casting the gloom of moroseness over your behaviour or deportment — nor that it should disqualify you for the necessary pursuits or business of life, — nor draw you from it's rational enjoyments. This would be entirely contrary to the spirit and intent of that religion which is preached to you. For we are taught to *love* God — to obey Him with *cheerfulness* — and to be thankful for the happiness which he has put within our reach.

But to think seriously of religion, is to be mindful of it's truth — to endeavour to impress this so firmly upon our minds, as to make that religion which God has taught us, the ruling principle of our lives — to look to it as the source of our present happiness — and to make it the foundation of our future hope. This is a principle that may be blended with all the engagements and avocations of life. And what is more, it may be boldly affirmed to be the only principle that will *insure* as much happiness as we either are, or shall be, capable of enjoying. If the power of God will not effect this, we may reasonably ask, what will? — "For," as the Apostle St. Peter observes, "he that will love life" — that is, he who wishes to make life so great a bless-

ing as that he may truly love it and enjoy it — "and see good days; let him refrain "his tongue from evil, and his lips that "they speak no guile. Let him eschew "evil, and do good: let him seek peace, "and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord "are over the righteous; and his ears "are open unto their prayers: but the "face of the Lord is against them that "do evil. And who is he that will "harm you, if ye be followers of that "which is good? But," he adds, "and "if ye suffer for righteousness sake," — that is, if ye suffer, in any way, rather than disobey God — "happy are ye" — not happy in your sufferings, for that were preposterous; but happy in the capability of bearing them — "and be not afraid "of their terror, neither be troubled. "But *sanctify the Lord God in your*

"*hearts:* and be ready always to give
" an answer to every man that asketh
" you a reason of the hope that is in
" you, with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. iii. 10, &c.)

These few words will in some degree show you what is intended by exhorting you to think seriously of religion. That is, to think sufficiently of it, to direct your lives, your words, and actions, according to its precepts. Nor does anything seem to be wanting, on our parts, for the establishment of such a principle, but a persuasion that the religion which we profess is true — that it is the word of God — a divine and holy dispensation. Whence the Gospel is said by St. Paul, in this Epistle to the Romans, to be " the
" power of God unto salvation, to *every*

"*one that believeth.*" (Chap. i. 16.) And I never can lose an opportunity of reminding you, that if we have no solid principle of faith, we can have no religion. This is an axiom of truth and reason that will not admit of any dispute, and that cannot be eluded by any sophistry. It has therefore been pertinently remarked by a very able and judicious commentator, that the two great doctrines delivered by St. Paul, in this Epistle to the Romans, are — first — the doctrine of faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the anointed Messenger of God, the Sanctifier and Redeemer of mankind — and secondly, as the ground-work, or at least as one efficient proof of the reasonableness of this faith — the Apostle asserts the doctrine "of the calling of the Gen-"tiles, the rejection at present of the

" Jews, and the *recalling* of them when " the fulness of the Gentiles was to come " in." *(Whitby's Preface to the Romans.)* The writer to whom I have alluded, calls this last doctrine a mystery — having copied the expressions of St. Paul; who speaks of the Gospel itself as a mystery. Nor can any one deny that the purposes of God are in general mysterious, above our comprehension, at present; but most particularly so with regard to those means by which they are effected. Although, let me suggest to you, the events which have accompanied the declaration of those purposes are so clearly and manifestly the works of Gods, that those only who in the language of Scriptures " have eyes " and see not, and ears that hear not," can continue to discredit them. Of this nature are those circumstances relative to

the descendants of Israel, to which I call your immediate attention.

It is well known, that Christianity was first preached to the Jews. That Christ was born in Judea, and that Himself, as well as his fore-runner John the Baptist, there began to unfold the doctrine of salvation purposed of God through the Gospel.

It is also known that the Jews rejected the doctrine. And although they acknowledge that they expected a Messiah — a King, a Prophet — a Deliverer, sent from God; yet they refused to acknowledge Christ as that Messiah — chiefly on account of the meanness of his birth, and the humble manner of his appearance and of his life — "Do the rulers know

" indeed," say they, " this is the very " Christ? Howbeit we know this man, " whence he is; but when Christ cometh, " no man knoweth whence He is." (John, vii. 27.)—They therefore put Jesus to death.

It is also well known, that soon after this awful and momentous event, the Jewish government was totally overthrown. Their metropolis—the chief city Jerusalem, levelled with the ground—their whole country over-run by strangers—and themselves, from that time, have continued a despised and miserable people—Dispersed, and wandering over the greatest part of the known world—and notwithstanding their vast numbers, without a ruler, a temple, or any form of polity whatever.

These are circumstances which may naturally be made the objects of enquiry, as a part of universal history. But when they are found to be the completion of innumerable prophecies, antecedent to the events by many ages — when they are seen to be indissolubly connected with that religion upon which we are taught to place our sole dependence, the consideration of them becomes a serious and indispensable duty.

The Jews are frequently mentioned in Scripture as a *chosen* people — and as a *holy* nation. But neither chosen nor holy on account of their own natural integrity and uprightness, so much as because they were separated by God as the instruments for carrying his determinations into execution — and that from them the pro-

mised Redeemer should proceed. Thus, when they were guided to the possession of the land of Canaan, the country of their enemies, they were told— "Not for "thy righteousness, or for the upright- "ness of thine heart, dost thou go to "possess their lands; but for the wicked- "ness of these nations, the Lord thy "God doth drive them out from before "thee, *And — that He may perform the* "*word which the Lord sware unto thy* "*fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*" (Deut. ix. 5.) Now the word, or the promise given to Abraham, was not only that his seed should possess the land of Canaan — but most eminently, that "in "*him* all the families and nations of the "earth should be blessed." (Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18.) And hence it is that St. Paul remarks in his Epistle to the Galatians —

" Now to Abraham, and his seed, were " the promises made. He saith not, and " to seeds, as of many; but as of one, " and to thy seed, which is Christ. (ch. iii. 16.) The same promise was repeated to Isaac, and to Jacob — and so on, through the descendants of Jacob to the patriarch David, as he is called by St. Peter — (Acts, ii. 29) — And in whom the promise of a universal Saviour, springing from " the root of Jesse," is to be more distinctly discerned. And thus St. Paul observes, that " The God of this people " Israel *chose* our fathers, and exalted " the people, when they dwelt as stran- " gers in the land of Egypt; and with a " high arm brought He them out of it." (Acts, xiii. 17.) — And of David he remarks — " Of this man's seed hath God, " according to his promise, raised unto

" Israel a Saviour, Jesus." (v. 23.) And again, St. Paul, speaking of the Israelites, has these remarkable words — " To whom " pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, " and the covenants, and the giving of " the law, and the service of God, and " the promises: whose are the fathers, " and of whom, as concerning the flesh, " Christ came; who is over all, God " blessed for ever.' (Rom. ix. 4, 5.) — It would be impossible to uphold by quotations from Scripture, everything that is advanced upon such occasions as the present. I repeat therefore that it is well understood and admitted that Christianity was first preached to the Jews, and had its origin from among them. Thus St. John remarks of Christ, whose descent from the patriarchs is carefully traced, that " He came unto his own." (chap. i. 11.)

Our Lord Himself declared, that "He "was not sent, but unto the lost sheep of "the house of Israel." (Matt. xv. 24.) And again, expressly to the woman of "Samaria, he observes — "Ye worship "ye know not what — we know what we "worship; for *salvation is of the Jews.*" (John, iv. 22.)

The next circumstance I have to notice is, that the Jews refused, and do refuse, to accept the salvation thus offered to the world through Jesus Christ. "He "came unto his own, and his own re-"ceived Him not." And upon this their refusal, the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles; that is, to heathen nations. Thus we read in the 13th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles — "Then Paul "and Barnabas waxed bold, and said,

" It was necessary that the word of God
" should first have been spoken to you;
" but seeing ye put it from you, and
" judge yourselves unworthy of everlast-
" ing life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

" For so hath the Lord commanded us,
" saying, I have sent thee to be a light
" to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be
" for salvation unto the ends of the earth.
" And when the Gentiles heard this, they
" were glad, and glorified the word of
" the Lord: and as many as were ordain-
" ed to eternal life, believed." (v. 46, &c.)

Again, it is related of the same Apostles, that " when they were come to Antioch,
" and had gathered the church together,
" they rehearsed all that God had done
" with them, and how He had opened

the door of faith unto the Gentiles." (Acts, xiv. 27.) And St. Paul, in his defence before Agrippa, observes, — "Having ob- "tained help of God, I continue," said he, "unto this day, witnessing both to "small and great, saying none other "things than those which the Prophets "and Moses did say should come; "that Christ should suffer, and that He "should be the first that should rise "from the dead, and should show light "unto the people, and to the Gentiles." (Chap. xxvi. 22, 23.) Accordingly this also — the calling of the Gentiles, or heathen nations to the light of the Gospel, will be found a most prominent subject of prophecy. I will only advert to Isaiah, as quoted by St. Matthew; and to Malachi. "Behold my servant "whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom

" my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit
" upon Him: He shall bring forth judg-
" ment to the Gentiles. I the Lord have
" called thee in righteousness, and will
" hold thine hand, and will keep thee,
" and give thee for a covenant of the
" people, for a light to the Gentiles."
(Isaiah, xlii. 1, 6. Matt. xii. 18, &c.)
This Malachi in allusion to the blindness
and ingratitude of the Jews — " For from
" the rising of the sun, even unto the
" going down of the same, my name
" shall be great among the Gentiles: and
" in every place incense shall be offered
" unto my name, and a pure offering;
" for my name shall be great among the
" heathens, saith the Lord of Hosts."
(chap. i. 11.)

Thus in the 9th chapter of the Acts of

the Apostles; we find in what manner it was intimated by the Spirit to Ananias, that St. Paul was "a chosen vessel, to "bear the name of Christ to the Gentiles," &c. (v. 15.) And both St. Peter and St. Paul appear to have been especially commissioned for that purpose. The former reminding the Jews in the following words — "Ye know how that a good while ago, "God made choice among us, that the "Gentiles by my mouth should hear the "word of the Gospel, and believe." (Acts, xv. 7.) And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, speaks of himself as the Apostle of the Gentiles. "For "I speak to you, Gentiles; inasmuch as "I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I "magnify myself." (chap. xi. 13.)

However, without pursuing these scrip-

tural testimonies any further, the fact is, that Christianity was first preached to the Jews, and had its origin from among them — that the generality of them refused to accept it, and "crucified the "Lord of life" — And that upon this refusal they forfeited the privilege of being God's peculiar people, and incurred his wrath, which is still undeniably manifested upon them — And the light of the Gospel was diffused among the Gentile or heathen nations. This seems to have been described and predicted by our Saviour in the two parables of the vineyard and the marriage-feast, which you will find in the 21st and 22d chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, in the 12th of St. Mark's, and 20th of St. Luke. Where Christ ends the parable of the vineyard by declaring, "Therefore I say unto you,

" the kingdom of God shall be taken
" from you, and given to a nation bring-
" ing forth the fruits thereof." (Matt. xxi. 43.)

The parable of the marriage-feast He concludes thus — " Then saith He to his
" servants, the wedding is ready, but
" they who were bidden were not wor-
" thy.

" Go ye therefore into the high-ways,
" and as many as ye shall find, bid to
" the marriage." (chap. xxii. 8, 9.)

St. Paul alludes to these circumstances in his Epistle to the Romans. Repreſenting the heathen nations as " a wild olive-
" tree " grafted on to the root or stock of Jesse, or of God's chosen people.

And lest they should disdainfully and presumptuously triumph over the forsaken Israelites, who were become, and who literally remain, "a proverb and a by-"word among all nations whither the Lord "has led them." — (Deut. xxviii. 37.) And lest the Gentiles should fail in *their* duty — the Apostle gives them the admonition in the text. "Boast not against "the branches: but if thou boast, *thou* "bearest not the root, but the root thee. "Thou wilt say then, the branches were "broken off, that I might be grafted in.

"Well, because of unbelief they were "broken off, and thou standeth by faith: "Be not high-minded, but fear. For if "God spared not the natural branches, "take heed lest He also spare not "thee.

"Behold therefore," he adds, "the "goodness and severity of God: on them "which fell, severity — but towards thee, "goodness — if thou continue in his "goodness: otherwise, thou also shalt "be cut off."

They were also reminded, that the whole of the Jewish nation were not thus punished and cast off. And we know that great numbers of them believed, accepted the faith of Christ, and were converted, by the preaching of the Apostles. And we are further told, that a time will come, when they shall all be converted And that time is said to be, when Christ's religion shall be universally propagated and received.

"And they also," says the Apostle, "if

" they abide not still in unbelief, shall
" be grafted in: for God is able to graft
" them in again.

" For I would not, brethren, that ye
" should be ignorant of this mystery, lest
" ye should be wise in your own con-
" ceit: That blindness in part has hap-
" pened unto Israel, until the fulness of
" the Gentiles be come in. And so all
" Israel shall be saved." And the cove-
nant of God with them, strictly perform-
ed. I think that this portion of Scripture furnishes us with many important subjects for meditation. And unless we can be prevailed upon to meditate at times upon such subjects, it is hardly to be expected, that our religion will have any influence upon us, or that it will be effective in the work of our salvation.

It was a devotional suggestion of the prophet Isaiah's, that "when God's judg-" ments are in the earth, the inhabitants " of the world will learn righteousness." (chap. xxvi. 9.) Now it is not so directly *judgments*, as we commonly use the word, as *commands, designs, decrees.** And I really think it is impossible to consider the history of the Jews, without perceiving that the appointments or decrees of heaven have continued undeniably visible towards them. It is impossible, I think, otherwise, to account for their present condition. A nation, or people, so peculiarly marked, so distinct—and though so dispersed and separated, as I have said, throughout almost the whole world, so distinctly preserved — That we may

* Προσταγματα. — Sept.

apply the language of Scripture to them and say, "What one nation in the earth "is like thy people, even like Israel, "whom God went to redeem for a "people to Himself, and to make Him "a name, and to do for you great "things and terrible," &c. &c. (2 Sam. vii. 23.)

And when to the contemplation of their own peculiar history, we add that of the transactions which have taken place in the world within these few years, and which are at this awful moment filling all the nations of the earth with astonishment and doubt, or rather anxiety, as to what is still to be accomplished. — When we behold the extraordinary efforts that people of all pursuasions are making for the universal propagation of

Christ's religion—efforts that we never yet have beheld; in the public and charitable dissemination of the Scriptures, and the provision for missionaries — When we behold the immediate endeavours now afoot for the conversion of the Jews, and learn that many of them have been converted in our own metropolis, and are themselves giving a lending-hand to the work; under these several striking circumstances, I think we may, without presumption, or fanaticism, conceive them to be among the appointed decrees of Providence; and indulge an opinion that the time is approaching, and perhaps at no unmeasurable distance, when the blindness of God's chosen people will be removed — and when, as the Apostle says, "The original branches shall be grafted "in again" — when in the language of

the prophet Isaiah "The Lord shall set "up an ensign for the nations, and shall "assemble the out-casts of Israel, and "gather together the dispersed of Judah, "from the four corners of the earth." (chap. xi. 12.) So that, as Christ said, "There may be one fold, under one "shepherd." (John, x. 16.)

There is nothing I trust, in this — and God grant, I be not deceived — that by any means can be made to act as an obstacle to eternal salvation. Of one thing I feel confident; — that the more we habituate ourselves to think of these subjects — and the more we endeavour to acquaint ourselves with the word of God — the more we shall be convinced of its truth, and perceive the necessity and the wisdom of living conformably to it.

If in any way, or in any one instance, we can ascertain that the predicted purposes of God have been accomplished, we surely cannot smother the belief and expectation that they will all be fulfilled in due time.

Let us turn our thoughts then individually to our own situation. And whilst we cannot fail to behold the fate of ignorance, obduracy, and incredulity, so strongly pourtrayed as it is in the descendants of Israel — let us not be "high-"minded," nor presume upon the outward profession of our religion, nor pride ourselves upon the superiority of our own understanding — but listen to the voice of prophets, of Christ, and his inspired Apostles, "and fear" — "For if God

" spared not the natural branches, take
" heed, lest He also spare not thee."—

In one path we shall be sure. And that is, in acknowledging the goodness of God in having called us to a participation of those mercies contained in the Gospel of Jesus Christ — And in obeying the commandments, and prescriptive rules of duty which Christ has given us in that Gospel. Thus shall we have the comfort of knowing that we are co-operating with the will and design of our Almighty Father; and that we are laying the foundation of our own happiness, " Till," as St. Paul writes to the Ephesians, " we all come in the
" unity of the faith, and of the knowledge
" of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,
" unto the measure of the stature of the
" fulness of Christ." (chap. iv. 13.)

And to Him, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for ever

SERMON XV.

RECOMMENDATION OF A DAILY SCHOOL FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF POOR CHILDREN.

MATTHEW, XXV. 40.

"*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto*
"*one of the least of these my*
"*brethren, ye have done it unto*
"*me.*"

SUCH was the acknowledgement of Christ our Saviour, towards those who

should manifest a humane and charitable disposition. And such was the promise of his acceptance, at the day of judgment, of those works of benevolence and brotherly-kindness, which should flow from a love of God, and from an humble desire of promoting his honour and glory. He will esteem, and reward with his eternal favour, every act of this kindness, as a tribute of praise offered to Himself.

It is placing the good offices which the members of Christ's body have it in their power to perform, in a very high point of view; whilst the illustrations by which such offices are recommended, make the performance of them appear not only practicable but easy.

To give bread to the hungry, and drink

to the thirsty, to show compassion towards strangers, and to clothe the naked; to visit the sick, and to administer comfort to those that are in prison. These are instances of mercy towards the poor and needy, of "fervent charity amongst "ourselves," and of "love one towards "another," in which all persons have, more or less, an opportunity of following the example, and of obeying the precepts of their Holy Redeemer. And they are such proofs of a benevolent heart as He will accept, as if the kindness had been bestowed on Himself. "Ye have the "poor," said He, "always with you; "and whensoever ye will, ye may do "them good: but me ye have not always." (Mark, xiv. 7.) By our attention therefore to those who stand in need of our assistance, we are still capable of mani-

festing that love and gratitude by which we are bound to fulfil the commands of Him who died to save us. And where that love and gratitude — that sense of duty "through Christ," as the Apostle says, "to God-ward," (2 Cor. iii. 4.) has its portion among the feelings of humanity, our charity, we may hope, will partake of that nature which "shall cover a "multitude of sins," (1 Peter, iv. 8.) and which shall recommend us to the merits and mediation of our Lord and Saviour. We have indeed before us his promise that it shall do so. "Inasmuch "as ye have done it unto one of the "least of these my brethren, ye have "done it unto me." Then, when our hearts are warmed with that love of God and of man which is the essential character of charity, shall we be ranked among

the righteous, to whom will be given the enjoyment of eternal life. (Matt. xxv. 46.) "Come, ye blessed of my Father, "inherit the kingdom prepared for you "from the foundation of the world. For "I was an hungered, and ye gave me "meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me "drink; I was a stranger, and ye took "me in; naked, and ye clothed me. I "was sick, and ye visited me; I was in "prison, and ye came to me." (v. 34, 35.)

It is not fanaticism to hope, that the disposition to relieve the distressed under every possible circumstance — to reclaim the wicked and abandoned — to inform the minds of the young and of the ignorant — and to preserve and to diffuse the doctrines of the Gospel — the tidings of salvation, in their purity; — It cannot, I

say, be deemed fanaticism to hope, that a disposition which is so eminently characteristic of the inhabitants of this country, is among the circumstances which have hitherto so visibly insured us the favour and protection of heaven; and which helps to give us the happy assurance of hope that "in due time we "shall reap, if we faint not." (Gal. vi. 9.)

It is with the sincerest pleasure that I find myself enabled to turn the contemplation of this subject to those endeavours which I shall now offer to your consideration, not, I trust with any intention of curtailing or abandoning, but of continuing and extending the benefits of intruction to the lower classes of people, which have hitherto been confined to one day

in the week. But that a day, which, while the observance of it is, I am convinced, one of the highest duties, and one of the greatest blessings attached to our religion, is at the same time, a *holy day*, necessarily precluding the advantage of many branches of instruction and improvement, which may be highly serviceable to the individuals as well as to society.

There can be no question that the establishment of sunday-schools has been productive of great good. The principle upon which they were adopted, was no doubt to promote the praise and glory of God — to teach the knowledge of his will — to inculcate a due sense of the duty and service we owe Him — and consequently to promote the present and

future happiness of mankind. I believe I might say, that every possible good, at least that the most material good may be expected of those who are taught to "hallow the sabbath, and to reverence "the sanctuary"—and who are habituated and enabled to pass this day, appropriated as it is by the divine laws to the service of God, in a becoming manner. I trust that such a principle once adopted, will never be lost sight of, nor be suffered to relax among us. The happiness of man depends upon those principles which are subordinate to the rules and precepts of religion. And such, I trust, will be the chief, if not the only principles by which the plan of affording further instruction to the children of the poor, or to those who need it, and are willing to accept it, will be materially

guided. The beginning is marked with every prospect of success. We have experience in our favour, and liberality has not been wanting. It has, on the contrary, exceeded expectation; and promises, with the blessing of God, to overcome every obstacle and difficulty.

Many arguments have been offered you from time to time, to show the benefit of this species of charity, both, I repeat, to the individuals who are the immediate objects, and to society in general. Of these I do not mean at present to remind you circumstantially; but one I would wish to impress upon your memory, which may be received as an axiom, as an established principle not to be controverted. And that is, that ignorance and idleness are the two great incentives and outlets to

every description of crime, and to every kind of profligacy.

It cannot but appear likely, and indeed it must be obvious to every one among you, that a person, in whatever rank of life he may be, who has no employment for his leisure hours, no resource to fill up his idle time, but the company of the idle and the dissolute, will be very apt to fall into vicious habits, and into mischief of every kind. And this must most probably be very often the case with those of the poor at least, who are incapable of enjoying the profitableness and the amusement to be derived from reading. I am far from intending to persuade you that the enjoyment of society, or of harmless recreation, is to be wholly relinquished. But it is clear that the domestic happiness

of married people, and in particular of the female part of the lower orders of life, in every condition, is often in great danger, for want of that knowledge and instruction which might be obtained, when the necessary labour of the day was over, if they were capable of reading; or of pursuing some domestic employment which might be of advantage to themselves and others.

I am not without great hope, that many of you have perceived, and are ready to acknowledge, the benefit already resulting from those endeavours which have been exerted for your improvement. And if they have failed in any way, of producing that good which such endeavours might have been reasonably expected to produce, it can only be from a want of zeal in the

continuation and management of what was at first so commendably and zealously undertaken.

I have still further to observe, that it is by no means on the mere occupation of the present time, either with regard to that plan which has hitherto been pursued, or to that further instruction which it is now the design of affording to the children of the poor, that we place our ultimate dependence. But we look forward to the time when those children who have now the principles of religion and morality instilled into them, and who are now made capable of furnishing themselves with the knowledge of God's laws, will be called into the pursuits of active life, and to the necessity of providing for themselves. When they will be thrown

upon a world in which a variety of temptation cannot be avoided, without, perhaps, a guide to direct, or a friend to admonish them. And it is then that these principles, and this degree of knowledge, aided or followed by those habits of continued industry and of application which it is now proposed to give them, according to the sphere or condition of life in which the wisdom of Providence has placed them,—then it is, that religious principles, and the means of honest employment may, and if not forgotten or neglected, most certainly *will*, prove of the greatest advantage. Then the fruits of our present labours may be expected to flourish, and, under the same all-ruling Providence which excited them, lead to the consummation of everlasting peace and happiness.

We read in the 9th chapter of St. John's Gospel, that when Jesus had found the man whom he had restored to sight, " He said unto him, Dost thou believe " on the Son of God? He answered " and said, Who is he, Lord, that I " might believe on Him?"

When we consider the character of Jesus Christ, and the eternal salvation that is proposed to us by his means; surely the knowledge of Him, and of the rules and precepts which He has left us for our conduct, must be deemed the most useful and valuable knowledge, that can be obtained. The mind of man never did, nor ever could devise lessons for the conduct of human life, so clearly and so completely adapted to every comprehension,

to every sphere, to every age, and to every occasion and pursuit, as those which are to be found in the Gospel of Christ. To these we must add the solemn determinations, and the kind promises which are there also propounded to us, upon the incontrovertible immoveable basis of truth and justice. There may the youth become acquainted with the beauty of innocence and virtue, and with the destructive nature of vice: and there may the deluded sinner learn the necessity and the efficacy of repentance. There the paternal care, the redeeming love and mercy of God towards all men is made sufficiently apparent. What knowledge can be put upon an equality with this? What so likely to influence the heart and the mind, so as

to bring forth into practice those qualities which alone can give peace and comfort to the individual, and promote the general welfare and happiness of society.

Who then is Jesus? let us all ask. The Gospel tells us, He, and He only, through the power and will of God the Father, is the great and mighty Saviour of mankind. He it is, who has promised to assist and guide us with his holy Spirit; and who, by his death, great as the mystery may seem for the present, has purchased for us an immortal crown of glory. But to become partakers of this, we must know Him, we must believe in Him, we must love Him, and obey Him

Let us consider what the world would be, if this doctrine were universally received and followed.

I trust it is the foundation of our present design to inculcate and to diffuse this doctrine. By enriching the mind of youth with becoming notions of God and of his worship, whilst it is most susceptible of impression, and before it becomes vitiated and spoilt by an acquaintance with the profligate and abandoned. By enabling the youth that are thus instructed to secure the means of their own improvement, and, with the help of God, to "work out their own Salva-"vation." To put it out of their power to plead ignorance, and to be a shield against the encroachments of idleness and dissipation. To furnish them with arguments against unbelievers and scoffers, and to arm them with strength and confidence against deceivers. So that they may not only "be ready," as St.

Peter advises, " to give an answer to " every man that asketh them, a reason, " of the hope that is in them," (1 Pet. iii. 15.) but may also feel the comfort and satisfaction from the prospect which a mind conscious of integrity and virtue will always be able to lay before them.

I have so far been inclined to dwell upon what may be reasonably expected from every endeavour to spread abroad the knowledge of God's holy word. And I must be permitted to indulge a wish of saying something more upon the bare advantage of reading; in order to meet the arguments of those who have been inclined to deny both the necessity and the propriety of furnishing the poor even with that single advantage.

For myself, I hardly know a more deplorable circumstance than that of a person's not being able to read. Whether we look at the certain loss on one hand, or the probable advantage on the other. But it has been urged, that such persons may learn their duty by attending places of public worship. And that is true in some degree. For here the word of God is read, and the admonitions and exhortations which are built upon it, it is to be hoped, have their use. It is almost the only way by which they can know any thing. And therefore let me take occasion to remind you, that the public worship of God is of itself a duty of the most unspeakable import. But whatever the impression may be that is made here, it requires not only great attention, but memory, and thought, and reflection,

to make it lasting; or to prevent it from being entirely obliterated before the recurrence of the next opportunity.

Now the word of God in our hands, is a constant monitor. And many an evil suggestion may be over-ruled—many a temptation vanquished, by listening to the voice of God which speaks to us in the Holy Scriptures. Which are indeed as St. Paul says of them "able to make us "wise unto salvation, and are profitable "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, "and for instruction in righteousness. (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.)

Many a poor person has been heard to declare, that the bible was his only support. For there God's favour is made manifest to the good and virtuous—There

comfort is administered to the distressed —There hope surrounds the bed of sickness and of death.—And there it must be owned, as not the least of mercies, the wrathful indignation of God is laid open to the eyes of the wicked. So that what cannot persuade, may deter—" that " the man of God may be perfect, tho- " roughly furnished unto all good works." (ib. v. 17.) For there the Almighty Redeemer is revealed, " The Lamb of God " that taketh away the sins of the world." (John, i. 29.)

Again, it has been urged, that much harm may be derived from the perusal of improper publications. Such things there are — and no guilt can exceed the guilt of those who bring them into light. But if the use of reading is to be excluded on

such account, it may as well be said that the mechanic had better not have learnt his trade; because his ingenuity and his hands *may be* employed in the contriving engines of mischief and destruction, instead of implements of public utility. The truth is, that they who make a bad use of the talents and opportunities which God may be pleased to give them, must answer for it. To their own master they must stand or fall. (Rom. xiv. 4.) "Whether it be of sin unto death, or of "obedience unto righteousness." (Rom. vi. 16.)—And if they who are taught to read, seek out for bad books, or, if they come in their way, prefer them to good ones, the crime will be *theirs;* and to *them* will the punishment of the authors be extended.

We know that all good is perverted — that the best intentions are perverted — that religion itself is scandalised and abused. But are all to be given up on that account? Is instruction to be witheld from those to whom it would be profitable, and who would make a proper use of it, because some may do otherwise? Besides, the number of those who are corrupted by bad books, can scarcely be brought into a comparison with that of others who are destroyed by the contagion of bad company. The evil therefore in this case will not arise from the good that is intended, but from a perversion of it. And upon the whole, they who have good principles instilled into them from their youth — who have the seeds of righteousness sown early in their hearts — and the means of renewing and cultivating them put into

their hands, will most assuredly be less liable to fall into evil of any kind, than they who are left ignorant and untutored, and who thus remain a prey to every kind of seduction, and to every incentive to idleness and sin.

What would the best and the greatest among us have been, if our youthful days had been suffered to pass without instruction? How much are we not indebted to the pains of careful and affectionate parents and tutors? How deep have been the calls of gratitude upon many, very particularly in this country, who have risen to the highest elevations of rank and fortune and respectability, and who have become themselves the most useful instructors of mankind, through the benevolent and charitable institutions which

abound among us for the promotion of science and of general information? If we then have felt the comforts of a religious education, or the benefit of instruction in any way, let us not "forget to do "good and to communicate; for with "such sacrifices," adds the Apostle, "God "is well pleased." (Heb. xiii. 16.)

Religion is the bond of love and union between God and man. The language of the Scriptures is, "Behold, the taber- "nacle of God is with men, and He will "dwell with them, and they shall be his "people; and God Himself shall be with "them, and be their God." (Rev. xxi. 3.) The words of the great Redeemer are, "If any man love me, *he will keep my* "*words;* and my father will love him; "and we will come unto him, and make

" our abode with him." (John, xiv. 23.)

Religion calls upon us to look into futurity, and to keep for ever before us the moment " when the dust shall return to " the earth as it was; and when the spirit " shall return unto God that gave it." (Eccles xii. 7.)

Besides this, religion, by the will and mercy of God, is the sure and the only bond of social happiness upon earth. Inasmuch as it inculcates the constant practice of those social virtues, without which, no degree of happiness can possibly subsist. And if we look for honesty, sobriety, chastity, industry, fidelity, and brotherly-love and affection; we must look among those who have learnt to love and to

fear God, and to keep his commandments: for among others we shall look in vain. And thus, religion is a contract, a tie, an obligation of the truest wisdom, of too sacred, too serious, and important a nature, to be thought of with coldness or indifference. And blessed are they who exert themselves in the promotion of it.

I have only yet to say a few words upon the advantage of adding to religious instruction, the means of laudable and profitable employment.

Useful instruction of any kind is only to be obtained by assiduity, application, and unremitted attention. These are the means by which difficulties are imperceptibly removed, and by which good habits

are imperceptibly confirmed. Experience may teach us that it is easier to prevent the growth of evil, than to correct it when it has taken deep root and is become habitual: and that it is an easier and a pleasanter task to instil good principles and habits into a youthful mind, than to reclaim a hardened sinner. The Scripture speaks of the force of custom or habit as being almost irresistable. And as soon, says the Prophet Jeremiah, may we expect "the "Ethiopian to change his skin, or the "leopard his spots, as we may expect "them to do good, who have been accus-"tomed to do evil." (ch. xiii. 23) On the other hand, "Train up a child," says Solomon, "in the way he should go; and "when he is old, he will not depart from "it." (Prov. xxii. 6.)

To these points then, I trust, our present endeavours will be directed. To guard the rising generation against the destructive nature of ignorance and idleness, and to give them the knowledge and the practice of that purity, industry, application, and decency of behaviour, which will be a comfort and a benefit to them in every condition of life. We shall also be giving them an opportunity of exerting in various ways, those powers and faculties with which God has endued the human mind, for his own honour and glory, as well as for the comfort and benefit of us his creatures.

I have detained you too long to make any further or particular mention of those beneficial effects which may be expected

to result from that degree of instruction which it is now proposed to extend to the poor children of your neighbourhood. But I console myself with the belief that they are well understood and acknowledged by most of those who hear me.

Let those who have children endeavour to keep in mind what has been said. And let them weigh well the consequences of embracing or refusing the provision that is now offered to them; and which I heartily pray, will be kindly and unanimously adopted and continued for the present and future happiness of the objects of their care.

Success will greatly depend upon the zeal and attention and discretion of the promoters — who must rest satisfied with

their endeavours — and who may humbly trust, to use the language of the great Apostle, that "they are fellow-labourers "together with God." — (1 Cor. iii. 9.)— "Who is not unrighteous to forget "their work and labour of love." (Heb. vi. 10.) Let them remember to their everlasting comfort, that they are immediately following the bright example of their Redeemer and Saviour, "Who went "about doing good." (Acts. x. 38.) And who promised to acknowledge those as his servants and friends before his Father in Heaven, who shall have been found to have followed his example in the readiest, and almost the only way they have in their power; and that is, by doing good one to another, "Inasmuch as ye have done "unto one of the least of these my Bre-"thren, ye have done it unto me."

And now unto Him who maketh all "things work together for good, to them "that love God."—(Rom. viii. 28.) "Unto "Him be glory in the church by Christ "Jesus through all ages, world without "end." (Eph. iii. 21.)

THE END.

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